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A Monthly Magazine

OF

LIGHT AND AMUSING LITERATURE

FOR

THE HOURS OF RELAXATION.

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LONDON SOCIETY.

JULY, 1893.

A Third Person.

By B. M. CROKER,

Author of "PROPER PRIDE," "DIANA BARRINGTON," "TWO MASTERS,"
"INTERFERENCE," "A FAMILY LIKENESS," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XIX.

STEALING A MARCH.

CHRISTMAS, however frosty, always seemed to thaw General Yaldwin's heart ; he was liberal in tips, he made presents to his next-door neighbours, there was holly about the grim drawing-room, and a monster turkey hanging in the larder.

On Christmas morning he actually kissed Rose—that is to say, he rubbed his moustache in the vicinity of her left eye—and told her that after breakfast she was to go and see what her grandmother had for her. A pair of gloves, or a veil, were the limit of her expectations, but she was wrong ; the old lady, who was propped up in bed, with feeble hands and the intense sympathy of the nurse, placed a lovely sable boa round Rose's neck, and a pair of gold bangles on her wrists. Her granddaughter was in ecstasies ; these were just the things she had always longed for ; how could grandmamma guess ? Grandmamma had consulted Annie Baggot, and these were the exultant results. As Miss Yaldwin, wearing her new boa, stepped out briskly through the snow, *en route* to church, that Christmas morning, she felt happy, and her happiness was reflected in her face. Roger was not in church, but as they walked home together, Annie had informed her that he was expected in the afternoon. Mrs. Skyler spoke a few words to the Yaldwins outside their gate, and stared long and fixedly at Rose. Certainly a sable boa looks to great advantage under a prettily rounded young chin, dress works wonders, and Mrs. Skyler felt more respect for the girl than she had ever done before. Roger arrived by the afternoon mail, and

as soon as he had exchanged greetings with his relations and presented his offerings, he hastened in to No. 13. Surely on Christmas Day there could be no ill-feeling, and he was resolved not to stand any nonsense *this* time. Alas for his determination ! Mrs. Skyler accompanied him, volunteered her escort in her pleasantest manner ; imploring him in her playful way, " not to go without poor little me." In company with " poor little me," the visit was paid, and he saw his divinity looking prettier than ever, most fashionably dressed, and undoubtedly pleased to see him, but he scarcely succeeded in exchanging a dozen words with her. The general talked to him incessantly about army news, and the chances of a row on the frontier, and the prospect of an advance on Meshed or Herat ; the Transcaspian railway was discussed at great length, and Rose heard with dismay that Captain Hope expected to be ordered off at any moment ; there was a certain amount of conversation about stamps, and then Mrs. Skyler made a signal for departure, and alas ! it had been just like any ordinary formal call, and Rose could have gone up to her own room and wept. But instead of this, she had to spend a couple of hours with her grandmother in order to allow the nurse to go and see her friends. As for Roger, he struggled frantically, but in vain, to break through the meshes in which Clara had once more entangled him. She appeared to have apportioned every hour of his day, and repeatedly reminded him that, " Your visit is to *us*, you know ; your time is short, and *we* really cannot spare you." She laid herself out to charm him never so wisely ; but she failed in her project when she threw out dark hints respecting a family disgrace next door, and mentioned in casual conversation, what an awful temper Rose Yaldwin had, and that she and her grandfather fought like a cat and dog, and it was all her fault, every one declared. But as Roger was behind the scenes, he was entrenched from these poisoned arrows as in a fastness, and he noticed that when his cousin recalled all her fair neighbour's unpleasant little attributes, she squinted in a most unbecoming manner, and he began to take a decided, though secret, aversion to the charming but malicious Clara. It was truly a case of so near and yet so far : when the general called he was unfortunately out, and when he escaped from Clara and hurried next door, the general was from home, and, face to face with Leach's grim visage, he could not ask for

Miss Yaldwin. He seemed to be baffled so easily, that he could have laughed, only he felt quite desperate and furious. He had come down to Morpington to see a certain girl, he had been four days in the next house, and only met her once and exchanged a dozen words with her. On the other hand, he saw more than enough of Clara Skyler; she sat over the fire with him, and talked to him confidentially, and flattered him discreetly; she took him for long walks, or to musical teas, and scarcely let him out of her sight. Mrs. Baggot and Annie looked on in the characters of neutral spectators, and marvelled to one another as to how it would all end? Clara was very strong, they knew, and a most determined woman; but could she marry a man against his will—a man who was desperately in love with a girl in the very next house? Alas, according to Mrs. Baggot's experience, such things had been. People may think Roger Hope a poor, weak-kneed creature, and a feeble-minded idiot, but he was nothing of the sort; unfortunately for him, he was not nearly as clever, or as full of resource (and lies) as his cousin, and he had a sensitive horror of hurting any one's feelings, especially a woman's; and when Clara appealed to him to take her out one day, and he had made a gallant stand, and politely excused himself, she had turned upon him a pair of eyes swimming in tears, and said in a broken voice, "There are so—so few people I really care for, so few who understand me, so few who sympathize with me, and I *did* think you and I were going to be such friends," and slowly then left the room, sobbing softly to herself. Of course Roger felt that he was a brute, and of course he apologized and "never did it again."

After five blank days, fortune and fate smiled on him! He had cherished a distracted vision of waiting on the general, and formally asking for Miss Yaldwin's hand, but he had not obtained the young lady's views on the subject, and Clara had assured him that as long as he lived, the general would never permit Rose to marry. One drizzling afternoon, the captive escaped to the club, accompanied by Jacky, who had also revisited Morpington. As he stood on the steps, he saw a girl laden with books hurry into the library across the street. In less than a minute he was beside her.

"Miss Yaldwin," he exclaimed, "I am delighted to see you. Let me carry your books. You are exchanging them, of course?"

Perhaps you will allow me to help you to choose some others. know where all the new novels are to be found."

"Very likely ; but I am not in search of fiction just at present. Grandpapa wants bound volumes of the *Asiatic Review* and some dry old work about the Tartar invasion," she answered, as they walked side by side into the long library. It proved to be empty, and here was indeed a chance for Roger at last !

"How is it," he inquired, "that I never see you now? I have been next door to you for five days. I have called almost daily ; but I am never admitted. Leach does not approve of me, I can see. But, joking apart, what have I done to offend your grandfather?"

"Nothing, I am certain," she answered colouring ; "but we are generally out when you come."

"But I have called at all hours," he persisted. "There seems a fatality against our meeting. I can't understand it."

Rose coloured a shade deeper. She understood all about it perfectly.

"And how are you getting on now?" he continued.

"Very well, thank you."

"And your brother?"

"Oh, only pretty well, I am afraid," meeting his gaze with bright moist eyes. "I sometimes think that I may one day go out and keep house for him, as you suggested. Do you remember?"

He remembered ; but when he had made the suggestion, Hubert was about the last person he had in his mind. "But would your grandfather spare you?" he asked incredulously. "If spared to Hubert, why not to *him*?"

"I don't know. Of course I could not leave grannie at present, and as long as she wants me I shall stay with her."

"And your grandfather—is he in a milder mood than formerly?"

"He is very kind to me now, and only think! he is going to take me to the ball on the eighteenth."

"Hurrah! you don't really say so!"

"Yes. The duke is coming to open the new town hall, and as grandpapa is on the committee he is obliged to be present ; and I am to go too." She paused to bow to two ladies who had recently entered, and under pretence of looking at magazines, were closely studying her and her companion.

"Your first dance, of course? I hope I shall be here for it, but I may be telegraphed for any day. I shall be uncommonly sorry to go. I've never cared a straw before."

"Have you not?" "Of course he is thinking of Clara," she mentally remarked.

"And about this ball on Thursday? How many dances may I have? The first waltz and three others—and supper?"

"Oh, Captain Hope—so many?"

"You will no doubt have hosts of clamouring partners; but remember, it will be my last dance in England for many a day."

"I will remember," she replied, and her face fell.

"Go *out*, Jacky!" roared the young man to Jacky, who, in the condition of a muddy door-mat, came trotting briskly up the room. "I left you at the club. Don't you know, sir, that dogs are not allowed in here?"

Jacky pleaded with his eyes and crouched abjectly, and then turned and travelled dejectedly away.

"I wonder you brought him down again," said Rose.

"Oh, he wished to revisit his old haunts before leaving his native land, and he wanted to say good-bye to you."

"But surely you are not taking him out to India?"

"Of course I am. Do you suppose that I would give away your grandfather's present? And—I have another reason besides."

(There were twenty people in the library now, chiefly elderly ladies. He dared not speak out. As it was, this interview was being conducted under the strictest surveillance.)

"What can that be?" she asked innocently.

"Can you not guess?" he returned, with considerable significance.

Rose poked the carpet nervously with her damp umbrella, and made no reply. It could not be possible that he was carrying Jacky round the globe because he had been her dog!

"My aunt is going to ask you and your grandfather to a little family dinner on Tuesday," resumed her companion, "with a round game of cards to follow. I rely upon you to persuade him, and to break the spell that seems to lie over Nos. 13 and 15."

"I will do my best," she answered; "but I have not much influence with grandpapa—nothing in comparison to Mrs. Skyler."

"Nonsense! How extraordinary! I should have thought that he was quite impervious to her fascinations—absolutely fire-proof—all his feelings securely stored up in a patent Chubb-locked safe. And here comes Annie."

At this moment Miss Baggot, clad in a long moist mackintosh, came tramping towards them, bearing a huge bunch of mistletoe in her hand, with an air of triumphant complacency.

"Good gracious, Annie!" cried her cousin, in a tone of affected horror. "Have you been walking about the town with that?" pointing to her burden. "What rashness—not to mention the impropriety of the thing and the temptation you have been putting in people's way!"

"Oh, I got it at a greengrocer's across the road—a bargain," she answered serenely. "Clara told me to be sure and not come back without it, and here it is."

"And better late than never, eh? Well, we will all escort it home in a cab. Miss Yaldwin and I have too much respect for ourselves to be seen with you on foot. And now shall we choose some books?"

There was a good deal of talking and joking over the selection, which proved to be an unusually tedious business; but when it was successfully accomplished, Roger insisted on the two ladies having tea with him at a well-known confectioner's. Annie did the honours with zeal, and was surprisingly facetious and talkative. It was a right merry meal—thoroughly enjoyed by all (including Jacky, who gorged himself with buttered muffins and shortbread). When it was over, they rattled off in a fly in the highest spirits, with Jacky under the seat, the mistletoe trailing from the window, and Roger saying to himself: "Come, this is like old times!" and proudly conscious of having stolen a march on Clara, hoping that Rose understood him, and that they would make it all right at the ball. Rose, on her part, was keenly alive to the fact that, despite the rain and mud and an impending scolding, she had spent a delightful afternoon and was supremely happy. As for Annie she was as proud as the traditional peacock. She felt that she was enacting the part of a benevolent fairy to these two young people, and that if Clara could but see her now, she would scarcely call her—as she had done that very morning—"a *harmless* imbecile!"

CHAPTER XX.

KEEPING THE CAB WAITING.

THE little dinner with a round game to follow, thanks to the artifices of Clara Skyler, never came off; and it so happened, also thanks to Clara Skyler, that Roger and Rose saw nothing of one another until the day of the ball. It was a most unpromising afternoon—the keen wintry blast seemed to penetrate to the bone. It was beginning to sleet, and Rose was hastening in through the garden gate—her grandfather had the latch-key already in the door—when Captain Hope eagerly accosted her.

“Good afternoon, Miss Yaldwin; I have just had a telegram, and I’m off by the mail to-morrow morning.”

“Oh, are you?” she rejoined rather blankly.

“Yes; sail in the ‘Euphrates’ on Saturday; not an hour to spare. I say,” coming a step closer, and speaking in a low and impressive tone, “you will be certain to come to-night—nothing will prevent you? Promise me,” he urged, looking at her steadily.

“I promise you,” she answered, with a somewhat nervous laugh. “You seem to forget that it is my first ball, and I shall be only too anxious to go.”

“I know, I know; but I have a particular reason—that I am sure you must guess—something I must say to you, and ——”

“Rose! what are you about?” bawled the general from the steps. “What the deuce do you mean by keeping the door open in this way?”

And Rose, whose duty it was to accord instant obedience, with a quick little nod to her companion, turned and ran up the path and into the house with a heightened colour.

“Never mind,” said Hope to himself as he entered No. 15, “there is a good time coming. I wonder if those bouquets have turned up yet?”

Meanwhile the general now sorely repented him of his promise respecting the ball; nevertheless, he intended to stick to his word like a man of honour.

“What on earth does an old fellow of my age want going to these tomfooleries?” he demanded irritably of his grandchild; “wearing an evening coat and a pair of tight boots and white

kid gloves, in order to watch a pack of idiots capering round the room. Catch me ever at another such 'Tamasha.' The only comfort is, that Scholes and Wapshott are bound to be there, and they hate it even worse than I do. There is nothing for us to do all night, but stand about in draughts and do our best to catch our deaths of cold."

"There will be the supper," suggested Rose, with the innocence of nineteen years.

"Supper!" he repeated ferociously; "why don't you say suicide at once, miss? Do you suppose that *I* am a likely person to while away the time—and my few remaining days—in consuming watery lobster-salad, stale tarts, or even slices of fat ham? I know a ball supper. Pah!"

"Well, at least you will get a rubber of whist," she ventured, timidly; "and you will like that."

"I shall like nothing about it," he answered morosely. He further informed her that he would not dress until after dinner; there was lots of time before eleven o'clock.

This was a perfectly natural arrangement for an old gentleman who was not engaged for the first dance, but Rose piteously explained that "they were invited for half-past nine, sharp; besides, that being on the committee, he was supposed to be punctual, in order to receive the guests."

"Be hanged to it, so I have! and I'd give ten pounds down to get out of the whole thing. Well, send word to Collins to be here at half-past nine to the minute;" and after issuing this command the general relapsed into awe-inspiring gloom.

Dinner was a dismal meal, eaten in a silence punctuated by the general's angry sighs and Leach's deferentially tendered wines and dishes. As soon as it had come to an end Rose flew up to her own room, eager to partake of the first delights of her first dance.

Yes, there was her fresh white gauze and satin dress laid out on the bed in all its glory, not to speak of its proper accompaniment of gloves, shoes, lace handkerchief and fan.

Two candles illuminated the dressing-table, and Carter, the housemaid, was in attendance as ladies'-maid for this unusual occasion.

And now the delightful operation of preparing for the ball commenced. "How neat her shoes were; how well her dress

fitted!" thought Rose—her first low body! Yes, and "she had done her hair most beautiful," so Carter assured her, adding the criticism that "any one would think as them back twists was put on false." At last she was ready, and she really could not help smiling at her own radiant face in the glass—and to her question,

"If she was all right?" Carter replied with enthusiasm:

"Lawks, Miss Rose! I never saw anythink so pretty. I'd never—never 'ave known you!"

"Fine feathers make fine birds, don't they, Carter?" rejoined the young lady modestly, and with a last glance at her reflection and a happy sigh, she rustled downstairs to show herself to her grandmamma.

The old lady was as usual propped up in bed, with a shawl over her shoulders and her ear-trumpet beside her. Having deliberately assumed her glasses she proceeded to inspect her granddaughter with immense interest. Rose was obliged to turn slowly round and round, to walk up and down the room. At last Mrs. Yaldwin was satisfied.

"She looks nice, doesn't she, Dixon?" (Dixon was the nurse.) "I believe she is very like what I was as a girl, only not quite so fair."

Here indeed was a sermon, in a few words, on the transient existence of natural charms, had Rose been in a frame of mind to meditate on such matters; but Rose was far too intent upon the ecstasies of the present moment to spare one thought to either past or future.

How could she bring home to herself the cruel lesson that life was but a fleeting show: that the fair, young, brilliant creature she saw reflected in the cheval glass would one day resemble the shrivelled, wrinkled, bedridden old woman who was now watching her with sunken envious eyes?

"Dear me! It seems only the other day since *I* was going to my first ball," whimpered Mrs. Yaldwin; "and *I* wore white satin too! Ah! dear me, dear me! Well, I hope you will have a very pleasant evening, Rosie—one you can look back on all your life. If you only had a lover now, the whole thing would be perfect."

Carter and Dixon exchanged furtive glances. Captain Hope's attentions had been frequently discussed below stairs.

Mrs. Yaldwin, who was unquestionably foolish at times, and had always been of a romantic turn, continued in her shrill, chirruping voice :

“What’s that your grandfather was telling me, about that young man who brings him stamps? You know who I mean—the one who *shouts* so dreadfully.”

“Oh, grandmamma!” protested Rose, covered with confusion and blushes.

“Well, well, come here. Dixon, where’s that brooch? Just hold the candle. Now come quite close, Rose; I am going to lend you—only *lend* you, mind—my diamond brooch. It will look well in the tucker of your frock—Jane was asking about it, but she shan’t get it.”

And with trembling, fumbling fingers, the old lady pinned the brilliants into the front of the girl’s satin bodice.

“I will give it to you some day—not now; I expect to wear it again myself, eh, Dixon? I remember I wore it for the first time at the governor-general’s ball at Calcutta. There now, I am tired. Kiss me, and go away and enjoy yourself, and be sure and come and tell me all about it to-morrow.”

Rose promised faithfully. As she went downstairs she saw the servants peeping over the balustrade that led to the lower regions, and heard exclamations such as, “Laws! Don’t she look splendid!” emanating from the cook and kitchenmaid. She glanced eagerly at the hall clock; it was on the stroke of half-past nine; she heard the fly stop at the gate—Collins was always to the minute—her heart beat high; she felt half-choked with various strange and delightful emotions, as she turned the handle of the dining-room door, and walked in.

* * * * *

But what was this? Truly a change came o’er the spirit of her dream when her eyes fell on the table, still littered with dessert, her grandfather in his usual attire, with his silk handkerchief spread over his face, lying back in his chair asleep and—snoring—gentle, comfortable snores. And it was half-past nine o’clock, and fully time to start. But this, alas, was not the worst. When General Yaldwin fell asleep, be it after dinner or at any other period, no one, save the minar, dared awake him. He always maintained that he slept so miserably that these

occasional forty winks of his were priceless. Poor Rose! She sat down and looked at the clock in despair. She herself was ready to the very last button of her glove. How long would he sleep? How long would he take to dress? These were the vital questions that she debated with feverish anxiety. She had known him to sleep for twenty minutes, and she had known these naps to be prolonged for hours.

Presently Leach entered, and began to remove the dessert things, as it were, secretly and silently. Oh, how she wished he would break a decanter, or anything. He then proceeded to make up the fire with the caution of a conspirator. Why did he not let the poker fall with a clang? If he would she would thankfully give him a golden sovereign from her scanty store. Were not moments to her as valuable as untold gold? Unfortunately for the agonized girl, Leach was an old soldier, and the general was his master, his superior officer, his idol, his graven image; he would not awake him purposely for half a year's pension.

Alas, it was now a quarter to ten. Rose watched the slow gilt hands travelling along the black dial until they came to ten o'clock. She was aware of the brisk driving of carriages—the people from next door had long departed; she had heard the gate clang, and the cab move off.

Oh, this was maddening, to sit powerless, and losing all this precious time, watching a black marble timepiece, and listening to an old man's long-drawn snores.

At length the patient Collins sent in a respectful message, "He had another fare, and must go, but would return without fail within half-an-hour," and soon afterwards he rattled away. It was now half-past ten. If the general would but wake all was not yet lost; he could easily dress in ten minutes—*his* hair would not take long to arrange—but no, he slept and snored on. Collins returned in the most honourable manner, at eleven to the minute, and rang a rousing peal. Rose opened the door and went out to him herself, clad in all the glories of her new white fur-trimmed opera cloak.

"The general is not ready yet," she explained; "if you will wait a little, I will give you ten shillings out of my own pocket."

"I'm afraid you'll be very late, ma'am," replied Collins; "the rooms was crammed to the door when I took Mrs. Duke just

now. It's a bitter night to keep the horse standing ; being my own property, you see——"

"I am very sorry ; but surely you have a rug. Oh, please *do* wait?" she urged almost tearfully.

Leach, who highly disapproved of this long conference and open door, now came forward and said :

"You will catch your death of cold, miss. Go in. I have all his things laid out ready, and the hot water ready to take up in one minute."

"You *will* wait a little, Collins?" she entreated.

"Well, miss," moved by her pretty, piteous face and eyes, in which two tears were twinkling, "I'll do my best ; but I have other jobs to bring home about half-past twelve—supper or no supper—and a fare from next door to catch the three o'clock express to-morrow morning."

"A fare from next door to catch the three o'clock express!" Of course it was Captain Hope, and Collins would drive him away, and she would never, never see him again.

She returned to the dining-room, and in desperation ventured to move the chairs about, and to give the fire shovel a timid push ; but it was all of no avail. General Yaldwin continued to slumber like an infant, his head thrown back, his mouth open, his legs extended, and his hands lightly crossed above the seat of hunger. Meanwhile Rose sat and watched him, her heart palpitating with sickening suspense.

It was now half-past eleven—a quarter to twelve—and then twelve chimed solemnly from a neighbouring church clock.

Twelve strokes, as fatal to poor Rose as the same hour to immortal Cinderella, for, as the last clanged out, Collins, the long-suffering, drove remorselessly away. Yes, it was all over, her chance of going to the ball and her last opportunity of seeing Roger Hope before he sailed for India, and leaning her head on her hands, Rose's long pent-up feelings found an outlet, and she burst into tears. She lay softly sobbing, with her arms on the table, until she gradually cried herself to sleep, and thus forgot all her sorrows. She dreamt that she was in a splendidly illuminated hall, thronged with people, all gaily dressed in evening costume, and among the crowd she saw Captain Hope, always endeavouring to approach her, and always, just as their hands touched, being swept away.

* * * * *

She was aroused from her tantalizing vision and suddenly awoke by a violent thump on the table, and raising her stiffened neck, she gazed across at her grandfather in mute amazement. Then she recollected all.

"God Almighty bless my soul!" he roared; "what does this mean? You and I asleep in the dining-room at two o'clock in the morning."

"You fell asleep after dinner, grandpapa," she answered with quivering lip; "and so—and so we never went after all."

"Never went after all?" he repeated, as if he still clung to some vague fond hope that they had been to the ball, and that this doze was the sequel. "You might have awoke me! Why did you not awake me?" he demanded. "Eh?"

It was vastly fine to ask such a question *now*. Rose knew right well, and so did he, that if he had been roused untimely he would have exploded in wrath and gone straight, not to the ball, but to finish his nap in bed. And Rose made no reply, but sat and stared at her grandparent with a white haggard face and a long gaze of inarticulate reproach.

"I am really sorry," he said; "I must have slept like a top. A most unusual thing for *me*. Yes, I'm uncommonly sorry, and after all the trouble of getting yourself under arms too! Well, never mind, Rosie; I'll buy you a very smart frock and take you to the next ball. I'll make the *amende honorable*, I give you my word."

But what would these promises of balls and dresses avail poor Rose, when by that time, Roger Hope would be thousands of miles away beyond the seas?

"I suppose we may as well be going to bed?" continued the general cheerfully as he rose. "Our candlesticks are in the hall, and at any rate we are something to the good—we have had our *first sleep*."

As Rose dragged herself wearily upstairs, her grandmother's door was softly opened, and Dixon peeped out and beckoned her in.

"She has been waiting for you, miss; I could not get her to sleep. She has been that restless and excited all night, I cannot think what has come to her. Please come in for just a minute or two and humour her."

"Well, Rose, my dear!" her grandmother called out, "how

sad you look! Did you not get many dances? Was the shouting man not there? How well you have kept your dress; why, it's as fresh as when you left. Come close to me, then I can hear you," now holding up an eager trumpet, "and tell me all about it. Did you enjoy yourself?"

This was the last drop in the unhappy girl's cup.

"Oh, grandmamma!" she exclaimed. She could not command her voice sufficiently to utter another word, as with a gesture of deprecation she stooped and kissed the old lady and fled out of the room.

(To be continued.)

Social Life in Galicia, North Spain.

"I HEARD you speak," said Mrs. A——, a friend whom I met in "town" the other day, "of social life in Galicia, Spain, as though there was a wide difference between the life there and our English life. Where would the differences show? Coruña, say, is not so far off as to make the *modus vivendi* very apparent, I should think."

"Oh! my dear," I replied, "you speak in ignorance. It may amuse you to give a little sketch of Galician social customs, and to exemplify better, let me follow the life of a middle-class Gallega—a girl, say.

"We will christen her Carmen, and let us imagine that, having had salt put in her mouth at the ceremony, to signify wit, the hopes have been realized, and the girl grows into a bright little being. Carmen's education must include music, chiefly of a superficial style, embroidery—you see I put these first, for a secondary thing is the mental work, generally leaving off when even rudiments are indifferently known. A disheartening practice to the teacher is the withdrawal of a girl from school at about fourteen, when she is put in '*largo*' (long dresses), tight-laced, and taught to 'show off.' Should there be a natural craving for books, as in our Carmen's case, I pity the girl—light novels she may get occasionally, solid books and *the Bible* never; while she is cramped and curbed by a foolish mother and, in most cases, an ignorant bigoted priest. Carmen must now not walk out daily, only on *fête* days and on Sundays and Thursdays, but she may sprawl for hours over a balcony, and even chat with the passers-by. No healthy games for girls in Galicia. I could not imagine a Gallega playing lawn-tennis with her tightened dress and high-heeled shoes, but she may ogle the men; filled with the idea to marry is her one aim and object in life. Say that our Carmen meets with a

lover: the man for a long while stares up at the balcony, follows the girl about, stares at her as though possessed (it is *repulsive*, this manner of staring!), eventually shuffles letters into a servant's hands, and in most instances receives answers in the same way; it may be months before the man comes forward in a manly style, as with us. There is, however, a tacit understanding, and *if* the affair comes to the point, it is only just before marriage that he is admitted into the house, then at stated intervals, and *never* alone; while the girl is not actually introduced to her future husband's family until *after* marriage. Well, say Carmen marries—this ceremony must take place in the early morning, at about seven; she dressed in *black*! There is a curious custom which takes place during the wedding service, called *arras*. The bridegroom casts into the hollow outstretched hands of the bride thirteen pieces of current coins marked with a cross. Old Spanish coins had all a very conspicuous cross, but now it is to be seen only on the top of the crown over the Spanish *escudo*. The bride must be careful not to let these coins drop, according to superstition. There appear to be two definitions in the word *arras*—past payment of a stipulated affair; given as a token also; for, according to popular belief, this is the payment of the bride's body. The custom is most likely a Moorish remnant; one finds Moorish traces all over Spain. There is no wedding ring! There are no laws to protect a girl in her love affairs, I mean there can be no 'breach of promise' case. A man may change at the church door, 'an' he will.' Several girls have told me 'they never really felt certain of their marriage until the ceremony was actually begun!' In Galicia, if a girl's life was restricted in many ways before marriage, it is worse now. She could then dance, now save only in *rigodons*, a kind of quadrille; also, if she excelled as a musician before, now it is not etiquette to play or sing—play for dancing if she likes, but *not* to 'show off.' She must walk out still protected. You will see occasionally pretty young creatures like our Carmen accompanied by vulgar, coarse, so-called *doncellas* (housemaids), with whom they may chat, or they may go veiled to mass alone. A Galician husband, after the first year, is rarely seen with his wife. They may be said almost to live separate lives, save in public places of resort, as the theatre, &c. *He* haunts the *cafés*; the word *home*, as we know

it, does not exist for them. In *réunions* the men sit together, the married women and the girls in separate coteries. As you may imagine, the general conversation of the women is *weari-some to a degree*. Poor things! no books, or what *makes* reading in our sense. A local paper they get, and naturally gossip reigns. If they are amiable, it is harmless gossip—if gossip *can* be harmless. It is something terrible, the ignorance of a Gallega of all life outside Coruña, and the crude ideas of *all faiths* save their own, all classed under the synonym *Jew*! The men, who have better advantages, rarely converse *sense* with women.

“And, oh! how terrible is widowhood. My heart has often ached for the young ones. Say Carmen loses her husband: the body is dressed in his best walking clothes, booted, &c.; is watched day and night for twenty-four hours, lights burning round it, prayers said over it. The funeral car is chosen according to the amount of money wished to be expended; there are three different kinds. The car is drawn by two mules, the same as used for the dust carts in the morning. Funerals take place at night (if at night they are accompanied by torches) or late evening, and attendants—*dust-men*—dressed in long black coats and tall hats; doleful music is played on a species of large flute. The coverings of the mules are hideous-looking—black cloth, lined with white, a death’s head, designed in white, large enough to cover the mule’s head. A procession is formed—priests, relations and friends, and closed carriages follow (if a person of position), also any one can join in on foot. I must tell you, the moment a death takes place, a table covered with a black cloth with death’s heads and cross bones designed on it, is placed in the entrance hall; a crucifix stands on the table and two candles. A man sits with an open book before him, and men—heads of different families—go and write their names in this, expressive of sympathy. The printed notices informing of a death are very depressing-looking: the black border, the call to pray for the soul of the departed, often promising indulgences for said prayers in the name of the disconsolate relatives, all headed by the inevitable death’s head, &c.

“The widow, for ten days, daily receives visits of condolence in a darkened room; visitors in black; the widow must not dress her hair, and is rolled up in a black shawl. For a year, she must not be seen in any public promenade, and then must go out only

at deep dusk. Meanwhile, prayers are prayed for the soul at stated occasions, and as *years* and *years* go on, each anniversary there must be a repetition of masses for the repose of said soul, black again assumed, and church lived in. The more money paid, the sooner the soul comes out of purgatory."

"Oh! my dear," said my friend, "you make me shiver! What are the calling rules?"

"Rules?" I said, laughing sarcastically; "*none*. I tell you frankly, there are houses where I have never seen the inside, after a residence of thirteen years, yet if I didn't punctiliously call, offence would be taken. Families live in *pisos*, or flats; servants are indifferently *bad*; dinner is any hour from two to four; if I call early, 'dining,' if later, 'sleeping,' later still, 'out.' My position as wife of an English official won't let me be admitted without etiquette, for they are a proud race. Of course, there are exceptions, invariably in the case of persons who have travelled, and so more *au fait* to modern customs, who keep hours for visitors; but the rule is as I say. There are no porters, and I do confess to returning home in a wretched temper, tired out scrambling up badly-lighted staircases. Each door has a movable wheel, which opens and shuts, an eye *appears*, a voice *growls*, 'Who's there?' You answer, 'Your servant,' to meet with an excuse as before stated. One day I was so tired that I said irritably to a servant, 'Your señora is at home, I heard her; I must come in!' I regretted it afterwards: the girl was scolded; such a scene of confusion I never saw before, and the poor lady was so fretted at the *Consula* finding all this. 'Then why expect me to call?' I said. She was a lady highly connected; at balls, &c., shone resplendent in family jewels and velvets; but dress for *home* is not thought of: the moment upon returning, everything is changed; the phrase, 'anything for the house,' holds good. It is difficult to meet with house shoes as *we* wear them. I invariably have to order them, my shoemaker always reasoning, 'Patch up old boots, señora!' or 'Buy *alparagatas*,' a coarse slipshod slipper. But wherever *we* differ, it is put down to 'the *eccentricity* of the English.' I have a weekly 'at home.' These same ladies come beautifully dressed, with vows and protestations of friendship, but their houses to me are besieged castles!"

"Do they promenade, have music?" said Mrs. A.

"There are lovely gardens and walks in Coruña, and a good

band plays twice weekly, but, so singular are Coruña customs, no one walks out until dusk. I have often wondered why, have imagined the windiness of the climate might account for this; but there are days of beautiful weather, quite free from wind, when you will see at an early hour children, nurses and soldiers only in the promenades; times indeed when wind has risen at sundown, *instead* of abating. At an hour when we are returning home, the *monde* is going out. Ah! what an utterly lonely life it has been for us; terrible, terrible!"

"Let me think, dear," said Mrs. A., "upon what other points I really need information. We will have done with the shivering sadness of Coruña 'pomp and pageantry of woe;' but tell me a little more about the love affairs. How long may a lover be seen talking to a girl?"

"Whenever he has time. I knew an instance of a young man who, on an average, spent seven hours shouting up to a window during the twenty-four!"

"Greatly detrimental to the girl's domestic routine, I should think," said Mrs. A.

"Yes! I must laugh at the affair. The man in question stood on a dung hill at the back of the house, infested by rats; a love ardour, undoubtedly. He offered himself and his *capa* (cloak); he had nothing else."

"You spoke of houses: what style are they?"

"Well, dear, outside imagine a pack of glass cards—so to speak—'glass, glass, nothing but glass,' as a traveller once said to me. Well, the frontages have glass galleries jutting out from the main building; these galleries are my horror: they let in rain in the winter, heat in the summer, but it is Galician architecture, and perfect in the eyes of the 'Coruñeses.' Fire-places are eschewed, as a rule, as unhealthy; and in a country where it rains the larger proportion of a winter, with a temperature none too high, imagine the discomfort! Braziers are in use, wretched inventions, to my idea, but people will use these who would shrink away from a fire-place. When we first came into *exile* (for such I call it), papered walls were condemned as unhealthy. Ah! me, landing here; going first into a Coruña hotel, *Dios me libre!* Then into our house, *now* made bright and cheerful with paper and fire-places. My heart sank, and my boy was born amidst frettings and grumblings."

"Well, dear, don't fret now, but tell me something of the bathing."

"Oh," said I, laughing, "we are so civilized now, we even wear French bathing costumes. It was the funniest thing at first; round-about affairs were worn, often made of bedding stuff. Our girls, English *bonne* and I, screamed at with insulting epithets, in our pretty Biarritz costumes: 'Women dressed as men, &c.' Then we swam, a marvel, and now—oh yes, we are much more civilized—swimming is practised, and in some cases excelled in. Still much of the old routine exists; women who leisurely walk into the sea, then stoop down with umbrellas held over them, remaining immovable; in the distance looking like animated mushrooms, or fungi, for the sunshades are of all colours. Men and women bathe separately. At the bathing establishment, although, I repeat, more advanced now, there is still the same wretched attendance, the same howling, screaming women, with 'foul mouths giving voice.' There are a number of cabins, single and double, and one large room, a fixture, for chatting and dancing, where a piano is kept; there is a gallery outside, where men sit and ogle the bathers through glasses. I must tell you the actual bathing commences on St. Carmen's Day, the 16th July. The water is thought to be more efficacious on that day; the number of baths as a rule must not exceed fifteen or thirty. Bathing, either sea or mineral waters, is undertaken as a sort of 'thing to be got through,' and there are actually numbers of people who never have their bodies immersed until then. You will not be surprised when I tell you many take soap into the sea for a very necessary cleansing process. I can't refrain from a little anecdote here. I felt *we* were impressing the natives with an idea of cleanliness, for we were naturally taking baths daily, when my housemaid said:

"'Por Dios! what dirty people you English must be to require so much washing.'"

"Are the men sportsmen?"

"Oh, valiant to a degree in *appearance*. Let me give you an instance. I was out walking one day right out in the country, with my husband, when we saw a sportsman, gun in rest, stealing along, a setter and *French poodle*."

"Oh! The poodle, with decorated tail and artistically shaven back."

"Well, on we stole, and we stood still breathless."

"Was there a covey of partridges, a chance hare, &c?"

"A number of tiny birds *settled* on a furrow; our gallant sportsman shot amongst these; on flew the dogs, and one *tiny* sparrow was found dead. I think keen sportsmen are men who have learned the art away from Galicia, for as a rule there is no respect of game laws. And a wholesale slaughter goes on; shooting *sitting* game is quite allowable."

"I can quite believe your life has been a lonely one."

"Yes, indeed," I replied. "Our very manner of walking is different; we 'go as if we meant it,' scour the country round, and at healthy hours; the Coruñeses *crawl* in a slow measured pace, always in toilette; the girls, no matter how cold the day, without jackets or mantles: the figure would be hidden too much with these. Then they have stated distances, the same monotonous walks from year's end to year's end. I laughingly tell my girls if I were to meet a lady outside the groove I should faint with surprise. *We* are the eccentric people, and even now surprise is expressed at our energy. 'A donkey for mother if she can't walk all the distance,' when proposing an excursion. And it is by such means, the bracing up our nerves, revelling in God's beautiful country surrounding Coruña, and keeping our library stocked, that we have not utterly stagnated here in a country still hundreds of years behindhand. Perhaps, also, in a life that has never been genial to us, I have felt the bigoted one-sided influence. I speak amongst the women; men rarely trouble themselves one way or the other. I will give you one instance. My girls have a young friend, a bright intelligent girl of Spanish birth, born in France, where she resided some years. 'J.' was longing for a change from the country, where her parents generally reside; I invited her; she stayed with us about two months. I naturally sent her to mass on Sundays, never coerced in any way; the girl was *entrusted* to me, that was enough. Since her return home the mother and 'J.' have had a sort of petty persecution because of this visit, which revived and brightened the girl, a visit she looks back upon with keen pleasure. But the general impression is that 'J.'s' future, after death, will be imperilled by living so long with heretics, and questions as to the final absolution started.

“Yes ; I have never felt I could open my mind in friendship ; confidences would be ignored in the confessional, and I have invariably felt a chilliness from those most expressing warmth during Lent, a season requiring much *Church exercise*, but *not* teaching the ‘*Charity which thinketh no evil.*’ ”

LOUISA MARY RAWSON-WALKER.

A Packet of Letters.

I.

[From Miss le Breton, No. —, Grosvenor Street,
to Mrs. Arbuthnot, Hôtel de Provence, Cannes.]

“ March 23rd.

“ MY DEAREST CHARLOTTE,

“ It is no use. Harry Barton is all that you say and more, but I am not suited to love in a cottage ; I am ambitious. My husband must either have a name or make one, and making takes so long. Edith has married for money ; I mean to marry for position. What are two poor and pretty girls to do ? And love ? I hear you ask reproachfully. Frankly, I do not much believe in it, as far as I am concerned at any rate. Perhaps I am cold-hearted. I do not know. I care for my friends ; I would do anything for you. But I have never yet seen the man who would tempt me to give up the whole world for his sake, and that, I imagine, is what love means.

“ Your loving cousin,

“ CONSTANCE.”

II.

[From Mrs. Meyer, No. —, Grosvenor Street,
to Mrs. Arbuthnot, Hôtel de Provence, Cannes.]

“ April 25th.

“ MY DEAR CHARLOTTE,

“ I suppose you have heard of Connie's wonderful luck. Old Uncle Silas is dead, and has left her all his money, sixty thousand pounds. Nobody guessed he was worth anything like that sum, and Connie was the only person who took the trouble to be kind to him. He was always fond of her when she was quite a little girl. Well, his fondness was to some purpose. With her beauty and fortune she may marry any one, and I hope she will not throw herself away on that penniless young

barrister whom Henry is so fond of, and who is always hanging about the house. I have spoken to Connie about him, but she only laughs. You have more influence with her than any one else. I hope you will use it for her true interest.

"I suppose you will soon be coming home. The Riviera must be getting hot and dusty. Henry wishes me to say he hopes you will pay us an early visit—you are a great favourite with him, as you know, and Lotty is longing to see her god-mother.

"Ever your affectionate cousin,
"EDITH MEYER."

III.

[From Henry Barton, barrister-at-law, Inner Temple,
to Mrs. Arbuthnot, Cannes.]

"April 25th.

"MY DEAR MRS. ARBUTHNOT,

"It is all over. Even if Constance loved me—which she does not—I could not come forward now when she is an heiress and I have nothing. She will always be the one woman in the world for me, but our paths lie apart, and it only remains for me to thank you for your kind sympathy and encouragement, which I shall never forget.

"Yours very sincerely,
"HENRY BARTON."

IV.

[From Mrs. Arbuthnot to Harry Barton.]

"April 27th.

"MY DEAR HARRY,

"I am very sorry. I think Constance would have been happy with you. I suppose it is useless to try and move you from your determination. Love has small chance with a man when his pride is in question, and he never seems to remember how hard it is on the woman. Whether Constance cares for you or not I cannot say, but if I were in your place I would try my fate. She is worth risking a refusal for.

"Always your friend,
"CHARLOTTE ARBUTHNOT."

V.

[From Miss le Breton, No. —, Grosvenor Street,
to Mrs. Arbuthnot, Hôtel Splendide, Aix-les-Bains.]

“ May 28th.

“ MY DEAREST CHARLOTTE,

“ The prince has appeared on the scene—a real prince, the Principe di San Felice, of an old Italian family. He was introduced to me at the Isaacsons' the other night, and since then not a day has passed without my seeing him. He is about thirty years of age, very handsome, with an aquiline nose and piercing dark eyes. Henry does not like him, but then you know poor dear Henry is so intensely insular. Can you imagine your little Connie a princess? I can quite. ‘Principessa di San Felice.’ How nice it sounds! Much better than Mrs. Harry Barton.

“ He is not rich, but, thanks to poor Uncle Silas, that does not matter. He supplies the title and I the money. I speak as if it were already settled; but, indeed, I think it only depends upon me. I have but to hold up my finger and he will be at my feet.

“ I wish you could see him. But you will, of course, very soon. His manners are too delightful for anything, and when he kisses my hand I feel like a queen. He says there are no women like the English, so beautiful, so virtuous. It has been the dream of his life to marry an Englishwoman.

“ I saw Harry yesterday evening in the Row. He bowed very coldly. I was walking with the prince, and Edith was a little way behind. He has not been near the house since Uncle Silas died. Any one would think I had got the plague by the way he avoids me. He looked very ill. I suppose it is over-work.

“ When *are* you coming? I shall be wooed and married and a' if you don't make haste. It was too provoking of your doctor to order you to Aix on the way home. Henry keeps worrying to know when you are expected. He says you are the only woman he knows with a grain of common sense. I hope you feel flattered. He thinks you will be on his side against the prince.

“ A thousand kisses.

“ Ever your loving,

“ CONSTANCE.”

VI.

[From Henry Meyer, No. —, Grosvenor Street, to Henry Barton, Inner Temple.]

“ May 25th.

“ MY DEAR HARRY,

“ You are a fool for your pains, if you will excuse my saying so. While you are hanging back from a mistaken sense of delicacy, the ground is being cut from under your feet by a so-called Italian prince, who in my opinion is nothing better than an adventurer. He is never out of the house. My wife and Constance have put their heads together and I am nowhere. If you have any regard for the girl you will come forward and save her before it is too late. She is dazzled by his title and position, but I believe she has a secret weakness for you in her heart, and that you may beat him yet. She is more hurt than she chooses to own by your desertion. Only make haste about it. You have no time to lose.

“ Yours ever,

“ HENRY MEYER.’

VII.

[From Miss le Breton to Mrs. Arbuthnot.]

“ June 1st.

“ MY DEAREST CHARLOTTE,

“ The prince proposed to me to-night and I accepted him. I have been wondering ever since if I did right. I shall have a devoted husband, a splendid position. My wildest dreams are realized. And yet—Harry’s face keeps haunting me as I saw it last, pale and sad under all its coldness. Well, it is his own fault. He could not expect *me* to make the advances. But, oh, Charlotte, why did you not come home a little sooner ? ”

“ June 2nd.

“ After all I only needed a little contradiction. Henry came in furious this morning after an interview with the prince, who had insisted on my fortune being settled on himself. Henry informed him that it was quite contrary to English custom, on which the prince drew himself up, said it had always been so in the San Felice family, and that to require anything else was an insult to himself.

"Henry used some strong language about a beggarly Italian fortune-hunter. I fired up. The prince was quite right, I declared. If I was ready to trust him with myself I could surely trust him with my money. Henry muttered something about the money being my best protection, but I would not listen. I am of age and I shall do as I please. The prince spoke to me about it to-night. He told me that he would rather give me up than that I should suspect him of mercenary motives, but that the pride of a San Felice could not submit to be dependent on a woman's bounty: a wife's interests should be identical with those of her husband. I quite agree with him. He looked very handsome and determined while he spoke. I had never liked him so well."

VIII.

[From Mrs. Arbuthnot to Miss le Breton.]

"Aix, June 4th.

"MY DEAREST CONSTANCE,

"Your letter has made me very uneasy. Better break off an engagement than be wretched for life. If you have the slightest feeling for Harry in your heart it is madness to marry another man, and of all men an Italian. I do not like what you tell me about the money. Listen to your brother-in-law. His judgment is sound and he is sincerely fond of you. Above all, do nothing in haste. If you really want me I will return at once, but my doctor is most anxious that I should remain another week to finish my cure.

"Your affectionate cousin,

"CHARLOTTE ARBUTHNOT."

IX.

[From Mrs. Meyer to Mrs. Arbuthnot.]

"July 5th.

"MY DEAR CHARLOTTE,

"Constance was married this morning. I am so sorry my aunt's illness prevented your being present. She looked perfectly lovely in her wedding dress. I have never seen a handsomer couple. The prince is simply devoted to her. He can scarcely bear her out of his sight. I am afraid he is a little inclined to be jealous. He would not allow her to accept any wedding presents from men. She held out for some time about

one—from that Mr. Barton that you and Henry are so infatuated about, though what you see in him I cannot conceive—but he carried his point. ‘Carina,’ he said, kissing her hand, ‘it is my love for you ; I cannot endure that any man but myself should give you presents.’ Connie yielded. He has a very strong will, and I think she is a little afraid of him. But that is as it should be. Henry says he only wishes I was afraid of him.

“Your affectionate cousin,

“EDITH MEYER.”

X.

[From Henry Barton to Mrs. Arbuthnot.]

“July 5th.

“MY DEAR MRS. ARBUTHNOT,

“I went to the wedding to-day to see the last of her. Perhaps I should have done better to keep away, but a singed moth flutters back to the candle. Poor Constance ! I hope she may be happy. If it had been any one else but that cut-throat looking Italian ! But these are the natural sentiments, you will say, of a disappointed lover. Henry Meyer looked very glum. He caught sight of me in the crowd and whispered : ‘This is your doing. I hope you feel proud of it.’ As a matter of fact it is his own wife’s. The seed she has religiously sown in Constance’s mind has borne fruit at last.

“I went up among the rest to shake hands with the bride and congratulate her. Her husband was standing by her side. She changed colour a little when she caught sight of me, and I saw his eyes rest on me with a look of angry suspicion. Well, I am not likely to give him much cause for jealousy. She has soared out of my sphere.

“I think she might have kept my present. It was to Constance le Breton I sent it, not the Princess di San Felice. Her sister returned it with a curt little note signifying that the prince did not care for his wife to receive presents from her male acquaintances. And not a line from Constance herself to soften the refusal.

“This is a selfish letter, but you will excuse it. Kindest and best of friends, you know how I feel. If I had listened to you—but Constance never made a sign. And now it is too late.

“Yours sincerely and gratefully,

“HENRY BARTON.”

XI.

[From Miss Laura Mason, Hôtel Beau Rivage, Ouchy, to Miss Amy Charlton, West Cliff Hotel, Folkestone.]

"MY DEAREST AMY,

"This is paradise. Imagine the most lovely blue lake with trees growing down to the water's edge, water splashing musically against the quays, mountains opposite all bathed in haze, and every now and then a glimpse of snow. I sit all day in the garden. Ethel is hard at work sketching, but I am content to enjoy. We have been very lazy so far about excursions: the weather has been so hot. But to-morrow we are going to Chillon. I don't care about it very much. One dungeon, I fancy, is very much like another, only this one happens to have been celebrated by Lord Byron. But I am longing to see the Dent du Midi. They say it is such a beautiful mountain. We caught a glimpse of it in the train as we passed.

"This is a charming hotel. There is a great cool hall with American chairs, where we sit in the evening when we do not care to go out. The people are not very interesting, except one couple, an Italian prince and his wife on their honeymoon. She is English and very pretty. They dine at a separate table and never speak to any one. She must find it rather dull, I think. People say she gives herself airs. I think myself she is unhappy. She looks very proud and cold and scarcely opens her lips. Her husband is handsome too, but rather fierce-looking, with an aquiline nose and flashing dark eyes. He watches her like a cat does a mouse. Ethel and I have nicknamed them Othello and Desdemona. I wonder what made her marry him. I cannot understand an English girl marrying a foreigner.

"A young Englishman has just arrived who seems rather nice. He sat next to me at luncheon, and we scraped acquaintance. (Ethel and I have insisted on lunching at *table d'hôte*; it is so much more amusing.) Papa knows him by sight. He is a barrister, and his name is Barton.

"I must leave off now. It is time to dress for dinner. Write soon and tell me how you like Folkestone. I wish you were here instead.

"Ever your loving,

"LAURA MASON."

XII.

[From Henry Barton, Ouchy, to Mrs. Arbuthnot, Woodbine Cottage, Shanklin, Isle of Wight.]

“Sept. 2nd.

“MY DEAR MRS. ARBUTHNOT,

“You see I have taken your advice and come abroad for my holiday. This is certainly a most lovely spot. I have seen nothing like it out of Italy. The scenery indeed is distinctly Italian, with a softness and charm that Switzerland as a rule is deficient in. I shall stay here a few days and excursionize about. There is rather a pleasant English family staying in the hotel named Mason—father, mother and two daughters. One of the girls has a look of Constance. The father is one of our leading Q.C.’s, so you see it is a matter of policy as well as of inclination to cultivate their acquaintance.

“I spent a pleasant half-hour this evening wandering round the garden with Laura Mason. She has a sweet voice and a soft sympathetic manner. Once or twice I could almost have fancied it was Constance who stood by my side in the moonlight, listening to my words with an interest that Constance, alas! never showed. They have asked me to go with them to Chillon to-morrow. I accepted. If one cannot get the substance one must try to be content with the shadow. There are other girls in the world, and if I could only give up sighing for the unattainable. Laura Mason is pretty, and good, I am sure. A man might go farther and fare worse.

* * * * *

“Constance is here! Coming out of my room just now I met her face to face in the passage. In my surprise I called out her name. Before she could answer her husband appeared on the scene. A terrified look came into her face; she turned away without seeming to recognize me and began walking quickly down the passage. He followed her and laid his hand on her arm. What passed between them I could not hear. He opened a door and they disappeared.

“The look in her face haunts me still. Is it possible that she can be afraid of him? My blood boils at the thought.”

XIII.

[From the same to the same.]

"Sept. 3rd.

"I could not sleep last night for thinking of what I told you. This morning I got up early and went out into the garden. There I met Miss Mason, who told me a story that it drives me wild to remember. It seems that Constance's ill-treatment by her husband is the common talk of the hotel. Their maid came up from her supper full of it. She declares that the other night her screams were heard all over the hotel. She came out into the passage, her hair hanging down her back, but he followed her and dragged her back, and they heard distinctly the sound of blows. Most of this, I hope and trust, is servants' exaggeration, but if only one-tenth part be true! Constance, my beautiful Constance, in the hands of a man who ill-treats her! Great heavens! What were we all thinking of to allow this marriage?"

XIV.

[From the same to the same.]

"Sept. 4th.

"Constance came down to luncheon to-day with her eyes red as though she had been crying. This time I was determined to speak to her. I watched my opportunity, and when she rose from the table I rose too and followed her to the door.

" 'Constance,' I whispered.

"She started.

" 'I must speak to you.'

"She gave a furtive glance round the room. Her husband had stopped to speak to some one.

" 'Not here, nor now. I will let you know. Oh, Harry, do not abandon me.'

"Her tone went to my heart. You remember how daring, how self-reliant she used to be. Just then her husband came up to us. He gave me a suspicious glance. I took the bull by the horns.

" 'I have had the pleasure of meeting you,' I said, 'at Mrs. Meyer's.'

“ ‘ You have the advantage of me, sir,’ he answered coldly ; ‘ I do not remember you.’ ”

“ I saw by his face that he did, but what could I say? He drew Constance’s hand through his arm and marched her off. I looked after them with a sort of helpless rage. After all a man has a right to choose his wife’s acquaintances.”

XV.

[From the same to the same.]

“ Sept. 5th.

“ I have seen her at last. This afternoon I was pacing up and down my room like a wild beast in a cage when the chambermaid knocked at the door. She handed me a note. It was from Constance, and contained these words: ‘ My husband is out. Come. The chambermaid will show you the way.’ I crumpled it up and followed the girl down the passage. She opened the door of a sitting-room. Constance was there alone.

“ ‘ At last !’ I exclaimed. ‘ Constance, what does this mean ?’ ”

“ She burst into tears. This nearly maddened me.

“ ‘ Stop crying,’ I cried, ‘ unless you want me to kill him.’ ”

“ ‘ Oh, Harry,’ she sobbed, ‘ I am so wretched. I am in daily terror of my life. It is a little better now you have come. I feel at any rate that I have a friend at hand. You will not forsake me ?’ ”

“ Forsake her !

“ ‘ He beat me yesterday because you spoke to me. That is nothing. If a man only looks at me he revenges himself upon me. Look there !’ She pulled up her sleeve and showed me her arm. ‘ He did that three nights ago, when I met you in the passage.’ ”

“ Her delicate skin was bruised and blackened.

“ ‘ Constance,’ I exclaimed, beside myself at the sight, ‘ why do you stand it? You have friends and relations. Why don’t you write to them ?’ ”

“ ‘ How can I? He reads all my letters before I send them. He says a wife should have no secrets from her husband. I had a maid, but he sent her away. He would have no spies, he said, about him. He has gone out now. It must be for something important or he would not have left me. He never lets me out

of his sight if he can help it. He locked me into my room before he went. But he has taught me a little of his own cunning. I waited till he had gone, then rang the bell and told the chambermaid he had taken the key by mistake. I don't suppose she believed me, but I was too wretched to care. And I was determined not to miss the chance of seeing you. She is a good girl, and will not betray me.'

" 'How long do you think he will be gone?'

" 'I cannot tell, but some time, I fancy, from his locking me in. He has gone to meet a friend, I believe; a horrible Italian whom we met in Paris. Oh, Harry!' her voice sinking to a terrified whisper. 'I am so frightened of him. He is so horribly strong. Last night he seized me and shook me—I felt like a child in his grasp.'

" She trembled as she spoke at the recollection.

" 'Constance,' I exclaimed, 'why wait for his return? Let me take you away. Let him come back to find you gone.'

" She recoiled.

" 'You, Harry, in whom I trusted!'

" 'I mean it in all honour and purity. Let me take you to your cousin. You will be safe under her protection.'

" For a moment I thought she was going to consent. Then she shook her head.

" 'No, Harry, I dare not. It would not be right. If it were any one else—but you. Think what a handle it would give him against me!'

" 'But, child,' I exclaimed, 'what will you do? You cannot remain here exposed to his brutality. It makes me shudder to think of it.'

" 'I feel braver now that I have seen you. You will help me, I know.'

" 'How can I? you refuse my help.'

" 'No, Harry, I do not,' her eyes filling with tears. 'Only you must find some other way.'

" I tried every argument in vain. At last I lost patience.

" 'Have your own way, then,' I said, 'and reap the consequences.'

" I was turning away, but she followed me.

" 'Harry, dear Harry!' imploringly. 'Do not *you* be angry with me. I dare not do it.'

"Her face changed suddenly, alarmingly. She pushed me towards the door.

"'Go, Harry, go, for heaven's sake! I see him coming. Don't let him find you here.'

"'And you, Constance?' hanging back. 'Let me stay and protect you.'

"'What good could you do? You would only make matters worse.'

"I turned to the door. She held me back.

"'Harry,' she said—and there was a strange entreating earnestness in her voice—'if anything should happen to me—if you should never see me again—forgive me and think kindly of me.'

'Her words struck like a knell on my heart. I seized her hand.

"'Constance,' I cried, 'there is yet time. Think better of it, and come.'

"'No,' she answered, snatching her hand from mine. 'Oh, Harry, leave me! Leave me in mercy before he comes!'

"And I obeyed. What else could I do? Yet ever since I have done nothing but reproach myself."

[Telegram from Mrs. Arbuthnot to Henry Barton.]

"Do nothing rash. I am coming out at once. Meet me at the 'Beau Rivage,' Geneva, on Wednesday morning."

XVI.

[From Henry Barton to Mrs. Arbuthnot.]

"Sept. 8th.

"Constance has disappeared. Her husband carried her off very early this morning, before any one was up. The chambermaid told me that the poor lady looked very ill and seemed very unwilling to go. She tried to hang back and say something to her (the maid), but her husband dragged her on. Some message for me, no doubt. It drives me wild to think of her in his power. I had not seen her again since our interview. She had kept her room. They have left no address. I have a faint clue, which I am going to follow up. If nothing comes of it I will meet you to-morrow at Geneva.

"Yours in haste,

"HENRY BARTON."

XVII.

[From Miss Egerton, Brown's Hotel, Dover Street, to Mrs. Egerton, Stoneleigh Park, Essex.]

“Sept. 1st.

“We travelled the whole way back to England with the coffin containing the body of poor Miss le Breton, who was married, you remember, this summer, to the Prince di San Felice. Is it not sad? She was only twenty-two and very beautiful. She died at Geneva after three days' illness. Her cousin, Mrs. Arbuthnot, was with her. They say the prince is broken-hearted, and no wonder. They had only been married eight weeks.

“I hope nobody belonging to me will ever die abroad. It gave me quite a shock to see the coffin brought out like a common packing-case and placed on the deck of the steamer. There it stood all alone while every one landed. I felt inclined to go and stand by it. There were two or three ladies on board in deep mourning—her cousin, I suppose, and her sister, Mrs. Meyer, who, I believe, made up the match.”

Into Temptation.

By A. PERRIN.

CHAPTER XX.

THE THIN END OF THE WEDGE.

“Perhaps you did not understand
How lightly flames of love were fanned.”—*De Witt Sterry.*

THE next day, Sunday, was one I always looked forward to with dread.

Of course the kacheri was closed, and Andrew conscientiously refrained from doing any work in the house, so he generally spent it at my side reading uninteresting books out loud by way of improving my mind, which he declared had been shamefully neglected.

On Sunday evenings, when we were in the station, Andrew would read service in the kacheri, as Kuttahpore could not boast of a church or a clergyman, and on these occasions Mrs. Herring would conduct the hymns devoid of any accompaniment, and lustily scream a duet with Andrew, who was usually the only person who gave her any perceptible support.

Mrs. Herring, ourselves and the Costellos, with a thin sprinkling of half-caste clerks and native Christians, were all that generally constituted the congregation. I was always afraid to open my mouth to sing in case I should laugh instead ; the Costellos stood in a silent black line, too heavily stupid to attempt to exert themselves, and the other members of the congregation had either no hymn books or could never find their places in time to do much towards helping to swell the sound.

On this particular Sunday afternoon Andrew seemed more inclined to find fault with me than usual. Of course the scene the day before was enough to account for this, but I could not help thinking that there must be something wrong with him and that he was not feeling well.

A spirit of revenge tempted me to recommend liver pills, but I refrained, in case he might really be feeling out of sorts. He looked yellow and pinched, and was not so *energetically* disagreeable as usual, though he was certainly not more amiable.

"I think I will ask you to read out loud to me to-day," said Andrew, as we sat down in the drawing-room. "I wonder you never think of offering to do so of your own accord."

"You always say I read so badly," I retorted in an injured voice.

"Then you should be all the more anxious to improve with practice," said Andrew testily. "This is where we left off last Sunday in camp. Now begin, and please pay attention to the punctuation."

The book was Buckle's "History of the Progress of Civilization," and I read on for an hour, with occasional interruptions and corrections from Andrew, who made me read various paragraphs several times over till I did so to his satisfaction.

At last, to my relief, a diversion occurred in the shape of Sir Gerald Daintry's cards. So he had come to call at last, and now he would be obliged to speak to me, as he certainly could not ignore me in my own house. I laid down the book with delight, and wished I could have run to my room for a peep in the glass, but there was no time now, for Sir Gerald was already in the room. He seemed inclined to make himself very agreeable, though Andrew was rather cross at the interruption, and would not help much with the conversation until Sir Gerald asked him some question with reference to pay and promotion in the Civil Service, when he instantly brightened up and talked for nearly half-an-hour, and then pressed Sir Gerald to stay to tea.

To my surprise he accepted, and he and Andrew kept up an animated conversation until it was over.

"Excuse me, my dear fellow," said Andrew pompously, "I must go and look out the books for church this afternoon ; I won't be long."

"How do you like India ?" I asked stiffly, by way of opening a conversation when Andrew had left the room ; "though I dare-say you are rather tired of answering that question."

"I don't object to it," he replied, smiling and showing his white even teeth ; "you see I have the satisfaction of repeating my reply to a different person each time, and the various effects are rather amusing."

"Why ? What do you generally say ?"

"That I think England is a much better place, which always seems to cause great offence for some mysterious reason. You

Anglo-Indians will never let any one abuse this country but yourselves."

"You may abuse it as much as you like as far as I am concerned. I simply hate it."

"I thought India was a woman's paradise."

"I could quite understand that if one lived in a large station and could thoroughly enjoy oneself."

"Yes ; this is certainly not a spot conducive to much enjoyment for a lady," he said thoughtfully.

"I wonder you care to stay here," I remarked ; "it is such a hideous place."

"I had only intended to stay three days," he said slowly, "but I have altered my mind now. I don't know when I shall go away."

I began to think Chatty must be the attraction. What a lucky girl she was. But the idea of a man like Sir Gerald wanting to marry a girl like Chatty Herring seemed too ridiculous to be true.

"Are you wondering why I am staying on in a place like this?" he asked, noticing my perplexed expression.

"Well, I must say——" I began in some confusion.

"Don't you think my brother being here is enough to account for it?"

"No," I said awkwardly.

"You're right, it's not my brother," he said laughing ; "but if you really want to know why I am staying on I will tell you next time I see you alone."

I looked at him in astonishment. Why should he choose to confide in me, of all people, whom he had so persistently avoided hitherto.

"Oh, do tell me now," I said eagerly.

He shook his head and laughed provokingly, and just then Andrew entered with a bundle of church books in his hands.

"It's almost time to be going," he announced. "You had better go and get ready, Josie. Will you come to church with us, Daintry?"

"Delighted," murmured Sir Gerald, and shortly afterwards we set off towards the kacheri, which was just outside our gate.

A native was energetically banging a gong, which hung from a tree, with a wooden mallet, making a deafening noise which nobody appreciated but himself, and a little knot of people were

gathered together outside the door awaiting Andrew's arrival as the signal to enter.

Mrs. Herring's face was a study when she saw Sir Gerald by my side.

"Dear me, this is very good behaviour, Sir Gerald. I thought you told me you never went to church," she said.

"It depends on who else is going," said Sir Gerald calmly ; and Mrs. Herring at once concluding that he had come to see Chatty, recovered her temper, and even became quite affectionate towards myself.

To my great surprise, there was Mr. Pierce, who hastened forward and explained that he had just got back from camp.

"You're looking so well," he said, as we shook hands ; "camp seems to have agreed with you. How did you get on ?"

I smiled meaningly at him.

"I took your advice," I said, "but it wasn't much good. I'll tell you about it another time."

With Andrew leading the way, we all trooped into the kacheri, and took our seats in the rows of chairs that had been arranged for the occasion.

I was between Mr. Pierce and Sir Gerald, Chatty having been pushed by her mother into a chair next the latter, while Mrs. Herring herself took up her position behind us.

It was a trying ordeal ; the native Christians contributed a strong odour of cocoanut-oil to the ceremony, and Andrew's voice nearly sent me to sleep with its unvarying monotony ; the only excitement being the hymns, one of which Mrs. Herring led in too high a key, and finding it an impossibility to reach the upper notes, she left them to our imagination, which sent Chatty into convulsions of silent laughter.

It was a relief to get back into the air, and we all stood for some minutes outside the kacheri door, until Mrs. Herring suggested a walk in the dusk.

She then performed prodigies of manœuvring to get Sir Gerald to walk ahead with Chatty, but the young lady had apparently taken a fancy to Mr. Pierce, whom she carried off almost at a run ; and as Andrew had attached himself to her mother, Sir Gerald and I were left to ourselves.

"Now," I said, as we sauntered along, "you can tell me why you mean to stay on here. Are you thinking of getting married ?"

"I am afraid not," he answered quietly.

"Why?" I asked with compassion. "Won't she have you?"

"Who?"

"Why, Chatty Herring, of course. There's no other young lady here except Miss Costello."

Sir Gerald burst out laughing.

"What in the world made you think I wanted to marry Chatty Herring?"

"You seemed to like her so much," I said rather blankly; "what else could I think?"

"You mean because I talked so much to her the two days I met you at their house? I did that on purpose."

"What *are* you talking about?" I exclaimed, becoming more and more bewildered.

"If I tell you, you promise not to be angry?"

"Yes. I promise."

"I did it to make you take an interest in me."

"Good heavens!" I said. "So you devoted yourself to Chatty Herring to make *me* take an interest in you?"

"Exactly. You knew perfectly well there was no one to compare with yourself in the station, and that the most natural thing in the world would have been for me to come straight to your side directly I first set eyes on you. If I had done so you wouldn't have cared a snap whether I spoke to you or not."

"And I don't care now," I cried indignantly, though I knew I was not speaking the truth, and that I had been greedily drinking in the flattering words.

"Then I'll go and take the place of Mr. Pierce, who is, apparently, my hated rival at this moment."

Chatty was giggling and ogling, and bumping up against Mr. Pierce in an ecstasy of flirtation.

"Very well," I said carelessly; "go."

"No, I won't. I'll stay here. You know I would rather talk to you than to any one else. Why, you and I are the only two civilized beings in this God-forsaken little hole."

"Not at all," I said, forgetting that Andrew was included in this category; "there is your brother."

A curious look passed over Sir Gerald's face.

"Yes, I had forgotten him; but he is not here now, so please try to imagine that I am my brother. What makes you like him so much?"

"I don't see how any one could help it," I said warmly, for I wished to stand up for Douglas, knowing that Sir Gerald was hard on his faults. "He is so good-natured and amusing, and always ready to put himself out for anybody."

"Lucky devil," said Sir Gerald. "I wonder if you would stick up for me like that behind my back?"

"I don't know you as well as I do your brother."

"No," he said, clenching his teeth, "and I don't intend to leave this place till you do!"

He said this with such vehemence that I looked up at him in astonishment, though I could hardly see his face in the rapidly increasing dusk. What did he mean? and ought I not to be very indignant at such speeches? I knew how to treat Douglas when he tried to talk nonsense, because I knew he did not mean it, but this man seemed so thoroughly in earnest that I was frightened as well as puzzled.

The thick, stifling smoke from a fire some natives were making under a tree, got down my throat and made me cough, and when I recovered my voice Chatty had come to a halt, and we found ourselves making part of a little group in the middle of the road.

"This smoke is enough to make one sick," she exclaimed; "and fancy! Mr. Pierce says he likes it, it makes him think of Scotch whisky."

"There!" whispered Mrs. Herring to me. "Didn't I always say that man drank? Oh, dear! I'm afraid he's fallen in love with Chatty; did you see the way he carried her off from under my very nose?"

Mrs. Herring snorted with rage and apprehension for her darling's future, and as their house was but a few steps further, she hastily said good-night to the company in general, with the exception of Sir Gerald, whose escort she demanded, saying that she and Chatty were much too nervous of stray dogs to go even that distance alone in the evening.

"It's getting very cold," said Andrew shivering, as the trio disappeared in the gloom. "I think I must be in for a go of fever, a thing I haven't had for years."

"You've not been looking well all day, Andrew," I remarked.

"My house is quite close," said Mr. Pierce. "Why not come in and have a dose of quinine in a glass of sherry?"

Andrew jumped at this offer, and we walked to the little white thatched house which Mr. Pierce inhabited.

It was a small bungalow, with one long room running through the middle, which did duty for both dining and drawing room, the latter part being made comfortable with easy-chairs, little tables, books, photographs and papers.

A reading lamp had been lighted, shedding a pleasant glow from one of the tables, and a bright fire crackled cheerfully in the grate.

"Oh, how nice to see a fire," I said, kneeling down in front of it, and spreading out my hands towards the blaze; "it's the first I've seen since I came to India. Why don't we ever have one, Andrew?"

"It's never really necessary," said Andrew, though I could see he was enjoying its unaccustomed warmth, "and our chimneys all smoke."

I glanced at him as the firelight shone full on his face, and noticed how pale and drawn it was, and a feeling of pity for him crept into my heart. He was so lonely and unloved, though it certainly was nobody's fault but his own, and I wondered if he ever looked back or regretted his youth, and if he had loved some girl when he was a young man, who had perhaps treated him cruelly and withered up his heart and soul.

While Mr. Pierce was administering quinine and sherry to Andrew, I took up one of the books on the table nearest me, and was surprised to find that I was holding "Butler's Spelling Primer" in my hand.

"Is this the sort of reading you go in for?" I asked, showing it to Mr. Pierce, who laughed and took it away from me.

"Why have you got it here?" I persisted with unwarrantable curiosity, "and here's actually a half-filled copy-book. Mr. Pierce, do explain this mystery."

"Well," said Mr. Pierce reluctantly, "you see some of these half-caste clerks and native Christians have got children who grow up utterly uneducated, and get no chance in consequence in the world, when their parents die and leave them destitute, as they usually do. So when I'm in the station, I have a little kind of class for an hour or so in the evenings, and just teach them to write and read."

"Oh! how awfully good of you," I said, looking at him in astonishment.

"Why can't their parents teach them?" growled Andrew, who was almost asleep from the combined effects of the fire and his dose.

"You see they have so little time. They are in office all day long and are too tired or lazy to teach during the few hours they have to themselves, and the mothers are generally too ignorant; so that unless somebody takes them in hand they are never taught anything, and what costs me nothing may make all the difference in the world to the poor little wretches in the future."

"I thought you hated children," I said, holding up the copy-book between my face and the fire.

"So I do, but that doesn't signify. They're too much afraid of me to give any trouble."

"I can't understand any one voluntarily having *anything* to do with children."

Mr. Pierce made no answer, but his face clouded, and I wondered if he had expected me to make an offer of helping him to educate some of the greasy, saffron-coloured little imps that pervaded the gardens of the clerks' bungalows.

Most probably he was disappointed that I had not done so, but I really could not make up my mind to commit myself, for I knew that if I made a promise in a weak moment, Mr. Pierce would relentlessly hold me to it directly we settled down for the hot weather. No. I would risk losing his good opinion of me, if he had one, and somehow I did not feel nearly so anxious to gain it now as I had been before going into camp.

He was much too good, I decided, and it was impossible to rise to such a level of perfection. I felt unreasonably angry with him, principally because I was ashamed of myself, and knew perfectly well that I deserved the reproach I saw shining in his large dark eyes when he said good-night to me.

CHAPTER XXI.

A KINDLED FLAME.

"——— alone I wait ;

Loss seems too bitter—gain too late."—*H. Jackson.*

ANDREW ate no dinner that night, and went to bed early, saying he was decidedly feverish and out of sorts, and as he seemed no better the next morning, I suggested sending for Dr. Herring, to which he consented.

"You had better stay in bed, Andrew, till he comes," I said, when I had sent the note.

"Of course," he replied, to my astonishment, "I never dreamt of getting up ; I'm not one of those people who play tricks with themselves. When I am ill I do my best to get well again."

He was evidently prepared to become an invalid to any extent, and I felt quite nervous about him until Dr. Herring arrived, and, after seeing my husband, informed me that it was only a chill, and nothing to be alarmed about.

"He must keep quiet for a day or two ; he has a little fever, but he'll be all right very shortly."

Andrew was rather indignant at this verdict ; he had made up his mind he was very ill, and like most men who usually enjoy robust health, imagined he was much worse than was really the case.

"Herring's an old fool," he confided to me ; "past his work. There's no doubt about that. He evidently doesn't in the least know what's the matter with me."

"Oh, yes, Andrew," I said, by way of consolation, "I am sure he is right about you ; he says there's nothing really the matter."

"*What ?*" shouted Andrew, "do you suppose I should be lying here neglecting my work if there was nothing the matter with me? I tell you, Josephine, I'm in a high fever, and I shouldn't be the least surprised if it turned to typhoid."

"Oh ! Andrew, I hope not."

"I can quite believe that. No doubt you are thinking what a trouble you will have nursing me."

"Would you like some soup made ?" I asked.

"Good gracious ! do you mean to say you haven't even ordered any soup for me? Of course I shall want soup, and barley water, and all kinds of things. Now don't go away. Send for the cook and give your orders here."

All day long I sat by Andrew's bed listening to, and sympathizing with, his complaints. I read to him, ran about the house fetching things for him, and obeyed his contradictory commands until I felt worn out and impatient. He certainly was the most trying patient to nurse that ever existed, and was not in the least grateful to me for my unwearying efforts to please him. He was very angry because Dr. Herring did not come to see him in the evening, and after dinner he told me to go

across to the Herrings' house and say he wished to see him ; I suggested sending a servant, but he said he would rather I went myself as then he would be obliged to come.

"I shall report that fellow to government," he said ; "the idea of his never coming near me this evening ! I might die in the night for all he cares, or any one else for the matter of that."

"But, Andrew, I'm sure you're no worse than you were this morning."

"Be quiet, Josephine !" exclaimed Andrew, his face crimson with rage. "I should like to know how you can tell how I feel ? Go and fetch Dr. Herring at once, and tell him I'm very much worse."

Remonstrance was useless, so I set out, rather glad of the walk than otherwise, as it had been a very trying day, and the bright moonlight and cold night air soothed my temper and cooled my burning forehead.

The Herrings had just finished dinner when I arrived, and Chatty was seated at the piano screaming popular ballads, while her admiring parents were established one on each side of her, nodding their heads in approval, and beating time to the music with their feet.

I explained my errand, and Dr. Herring, who never walked anywhere, immediately ordered his trap to be got ready.

Chatty had sprung up from the piano when she saw me.

"Oh, you dear old thing," she cried, running forward to embrace me ; "how nice of you to come over yourself. Do sit down and have a talk. Do you know pa's teaching me to talk Hindustani, and I know loads of words ? It's a first-rate language ; you always feel as if you were swearing."

"Chatty, my *dear* ——" began Mrs. Herring.

"*Chup*,* ma," shouted Chatty, airing her new accomplishment, while Mrs. Herring smiled indulgently, and became submissively silent.

"I can't stay," I said, as soon as there was a lull in the storm of Chatty's conversation ; "my husband wouldn't like me to leave him for long."

"Poor Mr. Boscawen," remarked Mrs. Herring significantly, "I do hope he has all he wants. Do you know how to make gruel, my dear ?"

* Hold your tongue.

"No," I replied, with a vivid recollection of Mrs. Herring's achievements in that line.

"Ah! I thought not," she continued, "and the poor dear man really *ought* to have gruel. I know he is not seriously ill, but that's just where the beauty of gruel comes in. It's the very thing when people are a little seedy."

"My husband seems rather nervous about himself," I said, "but I don't think he's very bad. I am looking after him well."

"Oh, no doubt you are," said Mrs. Herring incredulously; "but still I think I will run over to-morrow evening and see what he's getting, and perhaps make him a drop of gruel."

"Thank you," I said; "I am sure he will be very glad."

I pitied Andrew from the bottom of my heart with such a prospect before him, and then refusing Dr. Herring's offer of a lift, as it was such a short distance, I said "good-night" and started off again.

It was a beautiful night, though intensely cold. The dust on the road, and in fact almost everywhere, for Kuttahpore was a dry, sandy place, looked like frost in the moonlight, and there was a still, cold hush in the air, which was broken now and then by the weird wail of a jackal, or the shuffling of a traveller's shoes as he passed along, looking like a ghost, rolled up in his white cotton wrapper.

I walked sharply along the road until I came to the turning which led to our gate, and there I was stopped by the figure of a man, whom I recognized as Sir Gerald Daintry. A brown bowler hat was tilted over his nose, and he wore an ulster with a cape to it over his dress clothes; a little blue curl of smoke rose from the cigarette he was holding in his hand.

"What are you doing here?" I exclaimed.

"Same to you," he replied laughing.

I explained that I had been to fetch Dr. Herring, and was now hurrying back to my husband.

"I came out for a little turn and a smoke," he said. "That young heathen Douglas always goes sound asleep after dinner, and I hate sitting in a room alone with my own thoughts, so I came out to walk them off."

"Are they so very disagreeable, then?"

"They were to-night. Would you like to hear them?"

"Yes, but I haven't time to wait now. You must tell me

another time. You know I haven't heard yet why you are staying on."

"Yes, you have; I told you. Shall I see you anywhere to-morrow? Do you never go out in the mornings?"

"I don't think I shall get out to-morrow," I said hastily—my voice was shaking a little—"my husband is ill in bed, but perhaps I may go out in the evening. Now I really *must* go. Good-night, Sir Gerald."

I passed him rapidly and turned in at the gate.

Had he told me why he was staying on? My heart beat fast, and a little thrill of delight shot through it as I remembered that he had said he did not intend to leave Kuttahpore till I knew him as well as I did his brother. Surely it was not on *my* account that he was staying on? Then I scolded myself for being so conceited as to imagine that a fashionable man of the world like Sir Gerald could ever bestow more than a passing thought on a dowdy, insignificant person like myself, buried away in an obscure little up-country station in India. How different we must all look to what he was accustomed to. How he must laugh at us all to himself, and what amusing descriptions he would give of us to his friends in England. Yet—why did he stay on? I wished I had not told him that I might be going out the next evening. Perhaps he would think I wanted him to meet me. I would not stir from the house the whole day, I—— At this point in my reverie I bumped against Dr. Herring, who was just descending the steps of the verandah as I approached them, and this brought me to my sober senses.

"How is Andrew?" I asked.

"Oh, he'll be all right, my dear lady. Don't you worry yourself. He's always like this when he gets seedy. I know Boscawen of old. I'll look in again to-morrow. He's got rid of the fever, and you'll find he'll pass a good night."

He climbed painfully into his trap and drove off, while I hastily found my way to Andrew, who greeted me with severe reproaches for having been away so long.

He insisted that he was going to be awake all night, and that I must sit up with him, but luckily nature opposed his wishes and he slept fairly soundly, while I naturally passed a restless night, as I was expecting him to wake every minute and find me asleep.

The next day he developed a bad cold in his head, which, to him, was a most alarming symptom. Dr. Herring said it was only the result of the chill, which was passing off in this manner, but it was quite sufficient to render him more capricious and exacting than ever.

I spent anything but a pleasant day. Andrew would allow no one to bring his food to him but myself, and was perpetually requiring something that was not at hand, so that from seven o'clock in the morning till past five in the evening I scarcely sat down once, and when Mrs. Herring appeared to pay Andrew a visit, I welcomed her with positive joy.

Taking absolutely no notice of me, she went up to Andrew's bedside with the deepest concern in her manner.

"My *dear* Mr. Boscawen, how very unfortunate this is," she began.

"Yes, indeed, Mrs. Herring," said Andrew fretfully; "I'm very seedy. I had fever all yesterday, and now to-day I've got a terrible cold. I assure you I'm aching from head to foot."

"Dear, dear," said Mrs. Herring, shaking her head, "you must keep up your strength, whatever you do. Now, what have you had to-day?"

"Andrew," I broke in, unable to stand this any longer, "if you don't mind, I will just run out for a little fresh air. I feel so tired. I will come back directly Mrs. Herring goes."

"Very well," said Andrew ungraciously, "I know you've been fidgeting to get away all day."

Without waiting to hear any more, I got my hat and a wrap, for the evenings were very chilly, and hastened out. It was growing dark, and as I walked down the drive the air felt raw and biting.

I thought of my encounter with Sir Gerald the night before, and wondered when I should see him again. There was something wonderfully fascinating about him, with his handsome face and well-dressed figure. I thought of him all the way down to the gate, and when I reached it *there* he was, sauntering down the road, twirling a cane in his hand, and the usual cigarette between his lips. I felt inclined to turn and run back to the house, but he had seen me and quickened his pace.

"Here you are at last," he said, taking my hand in his and letting it fall after a firm pressure.

"What do you mean?" I said, growing red at the recollection of my having told him I might be going out this evening.

"Only that I have been walking about here for the last two hours on the chance of seeing you come out, and now my patience has been rewarded."

The blood bounded through my veins, and my cheeks burned still more hotly.

"I want to tell you something," he said after a short pause.

"What is it?" I whispered. I could not have spoken out loud, my lips felt dry and parched, and there seemed to be a big lump in my throat.

"Won't you come away from the road?" he said, looking round him; "we can't talk comfortably here."

We entered the gate and strolled into a little shrubbery which had been planted well away from the house. Then he suddenly turned and faced me.

"I am going away," he said abruptly.

"Why?" I gasped, with a sinking at my heart.

"Because," he said, with a little quiver in his voice, "I am afraid to stay. I'm afraid of *you*."

"Afraid of *me*!" I repeated in amazement.

"Yes. When I first saw you at Mrs. Herring's I made up my mind that I would stay here any length of time; I never thought of the future. And then, when I saw that you were—well, a little *vexed* at my apparent preference for that little fool Chatty, I was all the more determined. But *now*—I know that I must go."

"If I stay," he continued, looking steadily into my eyes, "I shall fall in love with you, Josephine. I am afraid I've done it already. I can't help it. I think of your face every hour of the day, and dream of it all night."

I made no answer. I was trembling from head to foot. I had never heard such words before, and I suddenly recognized the fact that I had been craving and yearning to hear them. Love had come into my life at last, but only to leave it again as cold and bare as it had found it. I must go back to Andrew, to complaints and petty trials, to economy and daily routine, a blank before me with nothing bright or sweet to look for in the long weeks, months and years I should have to struggle through.

I picked a leaf off a tree and examined it carefully to hide the tears that would well up into my eyes.

Sir Gerald came nearer to me.

"Are you angry?" he said gently. "I ought not to have told you, I know —— Look at me, Josephine."

"Look at me," he said again, and as I raised my eyes in mute obedience two large drops fell from them.

"What is it?" he cried, seizing my hands. "Why are you crying? Oh! my little girl, shall I stay? Shall I stay?"

A rumble of wheels fell on my ears and I started away in consternation. It was Mrs. Herring leaving the house. Could she see us from the drive?

"Oh! go, please," I said; "don't let her see us."

He understood what I meant at once.

"I will be here to-morrow," he said, pressing my hand hard, and then hastily turned towards the opposite side of the garden so that he should avoid Mrs. Herring's carriage, which was rumbling down the drive.

I went back to the house like one in a dream.

Could it be true that this man really loved me? And did I love him too? If not, why did I feel such agonies of despair at the thought of his going away? Why did I long so feverishly to see him again?

Andrew was calling me querulously, and I went to him slowly, almost as if I was in a trance. I put his feet into mustard and water, I tied flannel wraps round his head and chest, I administered hot brandy and water to him when he was settled for the night, and all the time I was recalling Gerald's voice and the look in his eyes, and when I went to bed myself I fell asleep to the tune of "Shall I stay? Shall I stay?" which coursed backwards and forwards through my brain all night long.

(To be continued.)

Who's the Woman?

By S. SELOUS,
Author of "ANGELA'S MARRIAGE," etc., etc.

I.

WHEN John Brown became tutor to young Harry Hastings at a salary of eighty pounds a year (which he considered handsome), he never imagined that one day he would become a wealthy man. The son of a poor artist who had left nothing but bad pictures and bad debts behind him, what could he expect but a life of penury, cheered by the enlivening prospect of ending it in the Thames or the workhouse? With such gloomy anticipations as these, a tutorship at eighty pounds a year appeared a perfect mine of wealth to John Brown, and to prove his gratitude for it he devoted himself heart and soul to the sowing of classic and mathematical seed in his pupil's brain. Young Harry did not take kindly to anything his mentor taught him; his brain was like that wonderful hat of the conjuror's, which, though you may fill it to the brim with rings and watches, refuses to produce anything but rabbits. The fine classical and mathematical crop that Brown had so carefully sown, the good solid wheat and barley, as you may say, could never be induced to grow, while tares and thistles, as Brown considered all tastes for such things as betting, racing and acting, flourished and grew apace, in spite of careful and persistent weeding.

And yet there was nothing particularly bad about the boy—he was a nice young fellow enough, and constant intercourse with an absolutely high-minded, truthful, honourable man (though a trifle dull withal), such as his tutor, insensibly strengthened all the latent good in him. Harry's parents had systematically neglected their son for the sake of society; he had always been snubbed by his father and kept out of sight by his mother, who did not care to own to the possession of a great hulking boy of seventeen; consequently all the love and hero worship that his nature was capable of feeling was bestowed upon kind, honest John Brown.

If John succeeded in nothing else he succeeded in implanting a wonderful amount of love and admiration for himself in his pupil's wayward heart.

Brown's tutorship extended over two years, then young

Hastings flung off his mental leading strings, went off to Africa to shoot big game—and disappeared as completely from the elder man's life as though he had borrowed money of him.

And now a curious thing occurred—the one great stroke of luck of John Brown's quiet, plodding life. An old maiden aunt died. She had always been considered miserably poor, but on her death it was found that she had managed to scrape together no less than two thousand pounds. This money she left to her nephew John, and it formed the foundation stone on which he reared his large fortune. It floated him into the Stock Exchange, it bought him a partnership, it gave him a fair start in life; after that his perfect integrity and good business head did the rest; his business flourished, his speculations succeeded, and in the course of ten years he found himself a wealthy man. Brown took a house in Mayfair; it was described as a "bijou residence," and rated as a diamond of the first water; but rents and rates were matters of indifference to the successful stock-broker. All he wanted now was a wife, and it did not take him long to find one. He fell deeply in love with the daughter of a friend on the Stock Exchange; she accepted him, and they were married in a few months. Alice Benton, now Alice Brown, was a beautiful woman; she was tall and fair and calmly classical—one of those happy beings that have their features and emotions well under control, and never look either too hot or too cold.

Brown adored her, and she accepted his adoration in the same calm, matter-of-course way in which she had accepted himself. She was faultless in his eyes, a being to look up to and reverence; they were an extremely happy couple.

They had been married about two years, and John Brown was as much in love with his wife as ever: more than ever, perhaps, on this particular day on which our story opens, for she had been away from him for some weeks, and her absence was becoming intolerable. It was June, and things were so busy in the City that Brown was unable to leave London, but he had sent his wife down to the north as it was unbearably hot in town. She was returning the next day, but as Brown walked slowly down the crowded street towards Pursell's, he wondered how he should get through all those long intervening hours.

A vigorous clap on the back and a hearty, "Hallo! old fellow; who would have thought to see *you* here?" effectually aroused him.

He started, and looked up into a handsome and strangely-familiar face. It was Harry Hastings ; though his fair skin was burnt almost black by tropical suns, and a heavy moustache shaded his lips ; though there were lines on his face, and all the change there that twelve years of living entail, Brown recognized his former pupil.

"Harry—my dear boy ! Where have you dropped from ?"

The two men exchanged a hearty shake of the hand ; they were genuinely glad to meet again.

"Where are you off to ?" asked Harry, linking his arm through Brown's ; "Pursell's, I suppose—I see it's grub time. Come to my rooms and grub with me. I've got diggings in Holborn ; come along."

The young man hailed a hansom and Brown got meekly in ; he was busy, but business must give way when old friends turn up from the Antipodes. Hastings' rooms were luxuriously furnished ; his cook a first-class one, his wines extremely select, his cheroots of the finest brand.

"Come, light up, old fellow," said Harry, cigar in mouth ; "you won't get tobacco like that every day." He threw himself back in his luxurious arm-chair, his hands plunged in his pockets, his feet tilted against the mantelpiece. "There's nothing like these cheroots for drowning care—deuce take the old brute ! And now tell me what you've been doing all these years, Brown—fallen on your feet, eh ? Made your pile ?"

"Yes, I've made my pile—but I'm only an old fogey now, Harry, a respectable stockbroker, such as all novelists love to have a fling at—and a perfectly uninteresting person. Let's hear *your* experiences. Where have you wandered to since you gave up your affectionate tutor twelve years ago ?"

"Oh, all over the shop—Africa, India, Australia, America—I've tried them all and am tired of them all. I'm sick of African fevers and Indian tigers and American beauties, so I'm giving England a turn. England seems panning out better just now, but—I wish to heaven I had never come here !" The last words broke from him with curious energy.

Brown sighed. How the young man had changed ! What had become of the frank, happy boy who had enjoyed his life so thoroughly and made such a fearful hash of the Latin verbs ? Dead and gone—buried under the pitiless weight of twelve years of life.

"There's something troubling the boy," thought Brown, who still considered himself in the light of mentor to the young man.

Hastings was certainly ill at ease; his manner was restless; his eyes shifted uncomfortably before Brown's kind look.

John laid his hand gently on his arm. "Something's wrong, Harry, my lad—what is it?"

Harry started, and stirred uneasily under the other's touch. His brown cheeks turned crimson—he hung his head shamefacedly.

"Yes, something's wrong," he said, looking down confusedly at the Persian carpet. "I'm in a mess—when is a fellow ever *out* of a mess, I should like to know! I came a cropper over the Derby last month—always was fond of betting, *you* know, Brown—and—I'm down on my luck—all to pieces, don't you know."

He plunged his hands deeper into his trousers pockets. His half-smoked cheroot lay smouldering on the floor. Brown picked it up.

"You are trying to put me off, and making a mess of it, Harry," he said quietly. "You've got something on your mind, something more than a cropper over the Derby. I'm a man of the world, and you can't deceive me. Who's the woman?"

The young man started. "What the devil's that to you?" he growled, then, recovering himself, "There is no woman—I wish you wouldn't startle a fellow with such deuced awkward questions. What woman should there be? I don't know why you should catechize me like this. Upon my word, Brown, if it were any one but you I should call it d——d impertinent."

Harry paced up and down the room like an angry young lion. Brown moved towards the door.

"I am sorry to have offended you, Harry. I—I wanted to be your friend, but as you take it in this spirit——" He paused and came back a few steps. "I can't leave you like this, Harry, dear lad; you want a friend—let me help you."

Harry looked up into John Brown's kind, gentle face, and his anger melted. He took the other's extended hand and pressed it warmly.

"Sorry I was angry, old chap. You are right; your worldly wisdom surprises me. There *is* a woman. I'm in a devil of a mess, and heaven knows how I shall get out of it. I—I can't tell you about it now—no time—I promised to meet Dicky Jones at the club. Come in next week, old fellow, and look me up."

II.

HARRY HASTINGS looked up from his letters with a bright smile of welcome.

"Here you are at last, Brown; awfully glad to see you." He put away his unfinished letter with a curious look of confusion on his handsome face. "I—I was just writing to—to her, you know."

"And who is she? Who is the woman?"

"Ah! that's my secret—and hers," said the young man. "I have *some* sense of honour, you know, though I don't suppose you will think I can have much of that about me when I tell you I'm in love with a married woman. You are so much better than most fellows, you know, that I don't expect much pity from you, old man."

John Brown sighed.

"I am sorry for you, my lad, and for her. Does she love you?"

"She tells me so."

"How long has this been going on?"

Harry shifted restlessly in his chair.

"Oh, for years! I'll tell you all about it from the beginning. I met her out in India ages ago, when she was a lovely girl of seventeen, and I tumbled head over ears in love with her, and she with me; she tells me now she has always loved me. If I had proposed to her at once it would have been all right, but—but it does seem a plunge for a fellow to bind himself for life when he's only one-and-twenty, and—and I funk'd it. I was a whole week making up my mind to propose, and before I had quite decided I got knocked out of time by a tiger and landed for six months in a hospital. When I got on my feet again she had gone back to England, and I didn't follow her. Well, I never saw her again until a month or two ago, then, as ill luck would have it, I went down to see some friends in the country, and *she* was staying at a neighbouring house. I met her out walking one day—of course I knew her at once; she was lovelier than ever—ripened, matured, and all that sort of thing, you know—and I felt I loved her as much as ever. I told her so, too, never guessing but that she was as single as I am, and then she blushed and sighed and cried a little, and told me she was married. Of course I ought to have gone away at once, never seen her again, but she looked at me so sweetly, Brown, and admitted with so many tears that

she didn't love her husband, that she wasn't happy, that—that deuce take me if I could tear myself away."

"Of course you couldn't," said Brown grimly. "I suppose you expected her to be brave for you both and point out your duty to you. Well, is she in London now?"

"Yes."

"And you see her often?"

"Nearly every day."

"And her husband—what does he think of this?"

"I have never seen him. She won't even tell me who or what he is—and I don't care—it's all the better. It's a bad business, Brown, and I wish to God I was out of it."

"Then get out of it, Harry; it's in your own hands. Leave England at once; it is your only chance."

The young man bent his head on his hands and groaned.

"I can't—I can't—I love her. And she is so lonely and unhappy! It would be brutal to leave her all alone with that husband of hers."

"Is he unkind to her?"

"Oh, she never says that—but, but she implies a good deal, don't you know. She never loved him, you see, though she has tried hard to do her duty. He is slow and dull and uninteresting and all that sort of thing; a regular old buffer, I suppose. Poor girl! she says her life would be miserable without me; how can I leave her?"

"Then where will this end? Oh, my boy, where are you drifting to?"

"The Divorce Court, I suppose," said Harry recklessly. "Some day I imagine we shall make a bolt of it—and then ——"

"And then you will realize what it is to ruin three lives. If you love this woman you will give her up."

"I do love her, but I won't give her up!" burst out Harry. "It's no use preaching, old man; I'm not good enough; I can't rise to the practice."

John Brown was silent a few moments, thinking. He pitied the young man; what could he do to save him? A sudden thought struck him; Harry had never had a happy home. During his wandering existence he could have seen but little of domestic life: what could he know of the sacredness of the tie between husband and wife—that tie that he was doing his best

to break? Who could tell but that a glimpse into a happy home might arouse some of the latent good in him ——

"Look here, Harry," said Brown abruptly. "I'm not going to preach—I see it's no use. Come home to dinner with me instead and see my wife—the very sight of a good woman and a happy wife is good for a man in your frame of mind. Come and talk to Alice—she is the best medicine I can recommend you."

Harry started.

"I didn't know you were married, Brown; 'pon my word I didn't. Happy man!"

John smiled, a smile of trust and happiness that lit up his rugged face into positive beauty.

"I *am* a happy man—thanks to Alice; when I think of my own good fortune in having such a wife it makes me very pitiful to you poor bachelors."

He took out his watch, a large gold timepiece as absolutely reliable as himself.

"Half-past six—we dine at seven. Come, Hastings, it doesn't take more than twenty minutes to get to Curzon Street—aristocratic neighbourhood, isn't it? I daresay you've often driven past our home—Bijou House, and a gem of a place it is! If there are two things I am proud of they are my wife and my home. You are not going to do any more writing, Harry? we shall only just be in time for dinner."

Harry Hastings was standing at his desk, busily arranging papers, and it was quite a perceptible time before he answered without turning his head.

"Very sorry, but I really can't come to-night; I—I've an engagement. Some other time I shall be delighted to make—your wife's—acquaintance."

Brown was quite *distract* that evening; his thoughts wandered to his old pupil with tiresome persistency. He hardly noticed that Alice wore a new and bewitching tea-gown; he did not see that though her eyes were fixed on her book she never turned a page.

Alice, too, was *distract*, but presently she yawned and looked up at her husband with a slightly unamiable expression on her calm fair face.

"What on earth are you thinking of, John? Do you know that you are a very dull companion this evening?"

John started out of his reverie.

"Am I, dearest? I know I'm a dull old fellow. I was thinking of my old pupil, Harry Hastings. I've often talked to you about him, you know, and if you remember, I met him last week in the City ——"

"Yes, I remember," said Alice indifferently, picking up the book which had slipped from her hand. "Well, why 'poor' Harry Hastings? I thought he was a very rich young man."

"He is a very unhappy man just now; he's got into an unfortunate entanglement with a married woman ——"

"Really? did he tell you so?"

"Yes—he told me; it appears he met her years ago in India."

"And who is the woman?"

"He refused to tell me—and he was right. Whoever she may be I pity her—and him."

He took his wife's pretty white hand in his and looked at her fondly.

"Ah, Alice, if there were more women like you the world would be a very different place."

She drew her hand quickly away, a sudden flush of colour on her pale cheeks.

"Don't be foolish, John; you run my rings into me—we are not on our honeymoon."

Brown felt a trifle chilled.

III.

SOME weeks passed, and Brown saw nothing more of young Hastings. He called at his rooms several times, but never found him in. He wrote and repeated his invitation to dinner, but Harry was deep in engagements and could not spare his friend an evening for weeks to come.

"Poor Harry," said John to his wife, "I am anxious for him. He's going to the devil rapidly—he knows it and he's ashamed to see me—poor unhappy boy!"

"I don't know that he needs your pity, John," said Alice, without raising her eyes from the toy terrier on her lap; "I daresay he is happier going to the devil in his own way than he would be if he led an absolutely virtuous and uneventful life."

"For awhile, perhaps; but for how long?"

Alice shrugged her shoulders.

"What does Tennyson say? 'Better fifty years of Europe than a cycle of Cathay!' Anything is better than dulness."

John looked at his wife a little anxiously; there was an unusual ring in her voice, a touch of bitterness that jarred upon him.

"My dear, are *you* a trifle dull?" he asked anxiously. "Perhaps it is a little slow for you to be all day alone here, while I am away in the City; I wonder what I can do to make your life a little pleasanter. Let me see, business is slack just now; what do you say to a week at Paris?"

Alice looked up at him quickly; it was a hot day, and the heat had made her unusually pale.

"You are very good, John, but—I don't care for Paris. I am quite happy—as I am; I am not in the least dull."

She smiled at him, and that smile completely dispelled any vague anxiety he had begun to entertain on his wife's account. But his anxiety for Harry was not so easily dissipated. The young man possessed an extraordinary power of winning affection, and he had won his old tutor's heart completely. He took as much interest in him as though he were a younger brother, and Brown determined he would make one more effort to save him. That evening he had promised to dine at his club with an old friend who had returned unexpectedly from India. Under ordinary circumstances, Brown would have gone on after dinner to the theatre and not have returned till late; but, to-night, he hurried away from the club soon after eight, and reached Harry's lodgings before nine. Colonel Holt had grumbled a little, but an irresistible impulse drove John towards his friend.

"Mr. Hastings is out, sir," said the servant.

"Then I'll go up and wait till he comes in."

Brown had seen a light in Harry's window, and convinced that the man was lying, according to orders, pushed his way past him and went quickly upstairs. He opened the door gently. The room was in confusion; the table was strewn with papers; on the floor lay a portmanteau, strapped and labelled. Harry was sitting at his desk, busily writing. He started up with an exclamation as John entered, his cheeks turning from red to white and from white to red again.

"Brown, *you* here! I thought——" He broke off with a gasp, staring at John with as horror-stricken a face as though he had been a ghost.

Brown glanced quickly from the young man's pale, changing face to the portmanteau, and from the portmanteau to the scattered papers on table and floor.

"So you've made the last plunge, Harry. You are going, to-night, with her."

Harry had recovered himself a trifle. He plunged his hands into his pockets, looking doggedly down at his pointed boots :

"Yes, I'm going, to-night, with her."

"And where to?"

"Paris."

Brown spurned the portmanteau with his foot.

"To Paris—and where else? To the devil, Harry! To ruin, to disgrace, to shame; and you are dragging her with you!"

"I know it, but it's too late now to think of that."

"It is not too late. Save yourself; save *her*."

"She doesn't want to be saved. She loves me, I tell you."

"Now, perhaps. But how long will that love last when she realizes what she is? and what you are. How can she love you when she remembers that you have betrayed another man; that you have ruined his life, made his home desolate? And you. Can you love a woman capable of such baseness? Love founded on ingratitude and crime *cannot* last. And when love has gone, what have you left? You cannot honour or respect one another; each must feel how vile the other is! What will become of you? Oh! Harry, my dear boy, for God's sake think before you face such a future!"

Harry turned fiercely away.

"I have thought of it all. I've thought till I'm nearly mad. I know my future; it's a damned future, and I deserve it. Why did you come here, Brown? I never meant to see you again. I don't deserve your pity or interest. I don't deserve it, I tell you! For heaven's sake go! You don't know. You don't know. You are driving me mad; you are torturing me."

Great drops stood out upon the young man's forehead; his face was livid.

"If I had only met you three months ago, before I saw *her*, I should have been saved. If I had only met your wife. Look here, Brown, don't forget this: I never knew you were married, you know, until—until it was too late. You—you won't forget that, will you?"

Harry spoke wildly, almost incoherently, and Brown looked at him, puzzled ; he was an unimaginative man.

"I don't know what you mean, Harry. What has my marriage to do with—with this?" and he kicked the portmanteau again.

Hastings flung himself into a chair and buried his face in his hands.

"Why don't you go? Why don't you go?" he cried, his voice coming out in muffled gasps. "I tell you I'm a brute—a beast ; you'll be sorry some day you ever spoke to me. And yet I have struggled—I have, indeed—but the temptation's too strong for me. Go away, Brown ; go!"

He looked up and met the elder man's kindly, pitying gaze, and started up with a cry.

"Don't look at me like that ! You torture me ! I tell you I'm in hell !"

Brown put a strong hand on each of the young man's shoulders and pushed him back into his chair.

"I am not going yet."

"It's no use talking——"

"But I mean to talk. Look here, Harry, have you ever thought of this unhappy woman's husband?"

"I told you I had never met him."

"Think of the wrong you are about to do him. He has never injured you, and you are going to blast his whole life. Harry, I am a married man ; I know what it is to have a happy home and a dear wife. Alice and I love each other, we live for each other, we honour one another—we are happy. It—it seems almost a sacrilege to imagine such a thing possible of—of Alice, but just let us *try* and imagine for a moment that—that she, my wife, learnt to love another man—some handsome young fellow like yourself—and—and that one night I returned to find her—gone."

"Well," said Hastings hoarsely, "what would you do?"

"I should shoot myself," said Brown simply.

Harry's eyes met his ; for a moment they looked at one another in silence.

"If this other man loves his wife as I love mine, he will do as I should do. Harry, dear lad, would you have his blood upon your head? Oh, my boy, save yourself this crime!"

There was a long silence. Harry shrunk back into his chair

trembling. Brown watched him anxiously. The ticking of the clock was loudly perceptible in the quiet room.

At last Harry rose unsteadily to his feet; his face looked drawn and sunken, there were tears in his eyes.

"You have won the day, old man," he said in a curiously toneless voice; "I'll go back to Africa."

"Thank God!" said John Brown.

Harry went to his desk, scribbled a few hasty lines, directed an envelope, then rang for the servant and gave the note to him.

"Deliver this at once," he said. "Take a cab and drive fast." The man went off with a bewildered look.

"There's a train for Southampton at six o'clock in the morning, Brown. I shall take that—my things are all packed—I'm quite ready. Are you going home now?"

"Yes."

"Don't go yet. Wait here while I write a few letters. I—I like to have you here."

John took a chair in silence, and for more than an hour no sound was heard in the room but the aggressive ticking of the clock and the scratching of Hastings' pen.

The clock struck eleven, and Harry laid down his pen.

"You can go now. Good-bye. I shall never see you again. Good-bye."

John grasped the young man's hand in both his own.

"Good-bye, dear lad, and God bless you."

Harry dropped his head down upon the table with something like a sob, and John went slowly to the door. A piece of crumpled paper lying at his feet attracted his attention. He picked it up mechanically—it was a letter in a woman's hand. He was about to throw it away, but a second glance at the handwriting caused him to put it quickly in his pocket. He closed the door behind him and went out into the street, walked rapidly along for some moments, then stopped under a gas lamp and read the letter through. It was very short.

"DEAREST,—I shall be ready this evening at ten o'clock. Come for me; my husband will be out till late, so it is quite safe. Oh, how slowly the hours go until I see you again! How can I have lived all these years without you?"

That was all—the letter was unfinished and unsigned.

* * * * *

It was nearly two o'clock in the morning when John Brown reached his home. There were lights in the drawing-room ; he went in. Alice was sitting up for him ; she was seated in a luxuriously-cushioned arm-chair, her fair hair falling loose upon her shoulders, her head bent over a book. She wore a loose gown of some soft white material, her cheeks and lips were white too, she had a very ghost-like look, seen in the dim light of the shaded lamp.

She glanced up quickly as her husband entered ; her face looked drawn and hard, the blue had gone out of her eyes, leaving them pale and dull.

"How late you are, John."

"Yes, I have spent a very painful evening."

"Really ? How ?"

"I went to Harry's rooms. I found that entanglement I told you of had come to a crisis, and——"

"Well ?" as he paused.

"Well, to make a long story short, I prevailed on him to give up this unhappy woman and go to Africa instead."

"She will thank you, I am sure," said Alice in a low, hard voice.

"I think she will—some day."

Brown leant against the mantelpiece opposite his wife ; it had been a hard evening for him ; he looked suddenly old, his kind face was very sad, his white lips dry and tremulous. Alice moved restlessly in her comfortable chair, then leaned forward and looked hard at him. Her eyes had a curious expression, half-reckless, half-despairing ; her hands clutched the arms of the chair with a grasp that hurt her delicate fingers.

"Well, John, have you nothing more to tell me ?" she asked in a voice whose studied lightness overlaid a terrible suspense. "Nothing really interesting ? Did you actually let Harry Hastings go off without telling you who *she* is ? Come now, who *is* the woman ?"

John Brown made no answer, but he looked at his wife, and she read in his eyes that *he knew*.

Thrice Engaged.

SHE was a very guileless young maiden, and her name was Mary Smith. She had been brought up on the bib-and-sampler system in a little country village, and at eighteen was as pretty and innocent a young thing as ever blushed at nothing—a sort of Bowdlerized edition of maidenhood. Tom Marston was the vicar's son, wild and scatter-brained. He had played his way through a public school, run riot at a crammer's, been plucked ignominiously for the army, and now, *because* he was wild and she was so very, very innocent, was busy falling in love with his pretty little neighbour, Mary Smith. He had it all his own way; there were no rivals to interfere with him; and Mary, after a very short siege, blushed deeply and capitulated at discretion. Their parents were not thought of at the time, but they came on the scene afterwards, and strictly forbade any idea of marriage till Tom was in a position to pay for the luxury of a wife. Tom's father wrote a letter and posted it without showing his son the address; but about two months later a letter arrived for Tom from India, offering him a berth on a tea estate in the Madras Presidency. He was to get Rs. 100 *per mensem*, with increased pay after the first year. "Let me see. That's equal to £10 a month, or £120 a year," exclaimed Tom, innocent of all the wild vagaries of exchange. "By Jove! What luck!" and off he went to Mary to tell her of his good fortune. So Tom, with a light heart, set sail for that old land of the Pagoda tree, where so many lives and hopes lie buried, and Mary went about sadly with tearful eyes. Tom was delighted with his life on the tea estate, but he soon discovered that he got very little change out of his Rs. 100 a month. He was popular, and young fellows from neighbouring estates had a habit of dropping in on Sundays and sampling Tom's beer and whiskey. The V. P. P. system had to give place to credit, and importunate letters began to arrive with threats of 12 *per cent.* interest. Marriage and Mary faded away to a very remote future; but Tom never despaired. He had long ago sown his scanty little crop of wild oats, and he worked hard and

steadily. His salary kept rising, but not sufficiently to raise him above the clogging slough of debt. At last, after seven years' hard labour, he had a wonderful piece of good luck. He drew the winning horse in a great Derby sweep, and won about a *lakh* of rupees. He paid off all his debts, wrote a voluminous English mail, the moral of which was that Mary should come out to him at once, and asked his friends to dinner. Then he bought an estate he knew of, ready fitted with tea trees, factory and bungalow, and resigned his appointment as superintendent. So it was settled that Mary should go out to him, and a chaperone was found for her in the person of a Mrs. Devigne, a languid lady, much addicted to incessant flirtations and a long deck-chair, who was returning to her husband in India. The voyage began in the ordinary way. The passengers gradually approached each other with little greetings and civilities, and before a week was over had formed their several little cliques and parties, and were familiar with every event in each other's life. The most assiduous attendant on Mrs. Devigne's deck-chair was a Mr. Theobald Sreck, a highly-mannered gentleman with a lisp, who darkly alluded to his aristocratic connections, and hinted with a captivating smile that Mrs. Devigne and Mary were the only people on board worth talking to. Mrs. Devigne was charmed with him, and Mary was fascinated by his eloquence. He lisped forth poetry by the hour, and thereby rendered a considerable portion of the deck free from all intruders, and he sang the most beautifully classical Italian songs to Mary's accompaniment. He walked many miles with her up and down the deck, and found out all about her—how she had been engaged to Tom for seven years, and was now going out to marry him; how she was an only child, and her father had a considerable fortune safely invested in a certain bank. And he became very attentive to her indeed.

One morning—they had touched at Malta the previous night—Mr. Theobald Sreck emerged on deck and almost ran into the arms of a fat little red-faced man, who had come on board the night before. He was smoking an early cheroot and his pyjamas fluttered in the breeze. Mr. Sreck couldn't smoke in the morning and objected to pyjamas on deck, so when the little stranger dared to offer him a cheroot and began to converse with him, he was very angry. He snubbed him severely and at last walked away from him; and the little man chuckled merrily and trotted

off to his tub. When Mary came on deck Mr. Sreck told her he had been insulted by a vulgar little "*cweature*" in pyjamas daring to "*intwude*" his society upon him, and was of opinion that "weally they ought not to allow that thort of perthon to twavel firtht clath." But behold, when they went down to breakfast, room was found for the little man by the side of the captain, and he turned out to be a very big person indeed, with all sorts of letters after his name, and V.C. among them, at which discovery Mr. Theobald Sreck gasped, and felt very unwell.

They were through the Suez Canal, and out into the Red Sea, and as the weather grew hotter Mrs. Devigne grew more languid, and more deeply rooted than ever to her deck-chair. Mr. Sreck sat and fanned her, and told her about the lucrative business appointment in Madras he was going to take up. She considered that his talents and education would be thrown away in an office, and that one who could recite poetry so beautifully should be at least a clergyman. How sweetly, she thought, his graceful lisp would sound in a pulpit! Then he grew very confidential, and the fan fluttered feebly as he whispered that he was in love with Mary, and asked for Mrs. Devigne's advice on the subject. But Mrs. Devigne said it was far too hot to give any opinion about anything, but that her dear Mr. Sreck had her best wishes. Then she began to talk to Mary about the roughness and solitude of a planter's life, and to contrast it with the jovial life of an Indian town, with an occasional change to some gay station on the Hills. And Mary sighed, and thought of the seven long years she had waited for Tom, and wondered what he was like now, and could he be as nice as Mr. Sreck? She was sure he had not such a pleasant smile. They sat on deck in the still tropic nights as the ship was throbbing her way through the Indian Ocean, and watched the stars swaying across the taper masts as the ship rolled lazily from side to side, and Sreck was lisping tender little speeches. Tom little knew that, though every minute brought Mary nearer and nearer to him, her heart was drifting steadily away. He went down to Colombo to meet her, and soon after the ship had swung round the breakwater, and taken up her moorings, he went off to her in a snorting little steam-launch. He wandered over the ship looking for Mary, and at last found her sitting on the grating arrangement by the wheel at the stern. "Mary!" he said, with outstretched arms;

but there was no answering look of love in her eyes, and he sat down quietly by her side. Then she told him with many blushes her pitiful little tale. She had made a mistake in thinking she loved him, but he was the only young man she had ever seen, and till she had met her fate she did not know what love meant. Her "fate" was called Mr. Theobald Sreck, and he would have met Tom himself, only he was obliged to go on shore as soon as he possibly could on most important business, and had left the ship only ten minutes before Tom appeared. She did not mention that she had told Sreck that Tom had said in his last happy letter that he was going to Colombo to meet her. Then she cried, and said she was a wicked girl, and Tom felt very cold, and got away as soon as possible, and spent the rest of the day in walking about Colombo with a stick in search of Mr. Theobald Sreck. But he did not find him; the ship sailed away to Madras, and Tom went up-country to stay with some planting friends till the next steamer called at Colombo on her way to Madras.

Sreck had returned on board in decidedly bad spirits. He had read in the newspapers on shore an account of the smash of the bank in which Mary's father was a shareholder, and a very bad smash it promised to be. With an agreeable smile he handed the paper to Mrs. Devigne, and before long Mary knew that her father was ruined, and that her prospective fortune had vanished into thin air. There were no more poetical recitations from Mr. Sreck. He entirely deserted Mrs. Devigne's chair; and after one short speech to Mary abandoned her society. Mrs. Devigne was languidly angry, and in spite of Sreck's bland smiles and allusions to "board-ship flirtathions" she cut him dead, and Mary flushed up hotly and looked away whenever they met.

Tom landed in Madras a week afterwards with a sore heart, and had his baggage taken to the club. His letters were brought him, and among them, to his surprise, was one from Mary. It was very short, merely asking him to meet her at Mrs. Devigne's as soon as possible. He drove there at once, and Mary came, blushing into the room.

"Oh, Tom," she sobbed, "I don't know what to do. I am very, very wretched. That man—but, oh! I can't tell you—but Tom, would you forgive me, and—and take me back?"

Would he? His heart gave a great bound; he took her poor

little flushed face between his hands, and—well, there are some scenes in this life better imagined than described. At last Tom tore himself away, and went back to the club, where he met a friend clad in gorgeous new raiment. Tom asked him who his tailor was, and he mentioned the name.

“They have lately got out a new cutter from England,” he said; “a wonderful fellow who calls himself Theobald Sreck.”

“Who?” roared Tom.

“Funny name, isn’t it?” said his friend; “but he’s a rare good man at his work.”

Tom retired for a quiet cheroot, and then drove away to his friend’s tailor. He was received by Mr. Theobald Sreck with a particularly ingratiating smile. Tom saw that smile born, and watched it gradually widen as he advanced into the shop. He said he wanted some clothes for a wedding, and made his choice among the “sweet” or “quiet” patterns Mr. Sreck displayed before him. He had been quite cheerful hitherto, but as Mr. Sreck hovered round him with a tape measure, and lisped mysterious figures to an attendant clerk, his wrath gradually rose, and at the end he could hardly restrain himself.

“May I athk if I have had the pleathure of meathuring you for your own wedding?” blandly inquired Mr. Sreck.

“Yes, you have,” flashed Tom. “My name is Marston, and in these clothes I am going to marry Miss Mary Smith. And you—you are a low, mean blackguard.”

Sreck pocketed the insult, and said nothing; but he became very white, and bowed Tom out with a vast, sickly smile.

* * * * *

“What swagger clothes,” said Mrs. Marston, flicking some grains of Mrs. Devigne’s rice from the collar. “Where did you get them, Tom?”

“They were built by Mr. Theobald Sreck,” he replied. “My darling,” he laughed, “I have had my revenge. He made my wedding garment!”

MONTAGUE KEY.

Denzil Morris ; Dramatist.

By CLIVE HOLLAND.

PART I.

"And she and Fate writ failure on the door of his heart."

IT was one of those fine days in early summer, when the hours seem longest and brightest. The scene was the river, upon the banks of which, hard by Hampton, the trees stood thick, scarce moving. The hot sun had long ago eaten up the faint breeze, which earlier in the day had stirred their leaves to rustling. The water itself shimmered and sparkled in the sunlight, and the sluggish eddies formed polished, golden bowls into which unwary waterflies, stray leaves and floating twigs were relentlessly drawn. Swallows skimmed along the surface with noisy twitterings, now rising, now falling, almost the only sign of life and movement.

At length, round a bend of the river below Hampton Palace, two boats are seen slowly advancing. In the first are two young men, rowing in "whites," a term which is simple and at the same time wonderfully inclusive, and in the stern a young lady sits, regarding their exertions with a feminine and somewhat commiserating languor, bred of a busy season. Her face is a beautiful one, and little likely indeed to be passed by unnoticed, for there was more than mere prettiness in it ; scarcely intellectual, it was difficult to describe, for one hardly looks for cynicism in the face of a girl of twenty, who has still the fag end of her first season to come, and who ought to be as yet but lightly versed in the arts and wiles of "society" belles.

Lois Maitland was the daughter of Henry Maitland, the "Plumbago King," as the personal journalism of the day loved to call him, a cool, hard-headed man of business, in the habit of always getting twenty shillings—and oftener than not more—for his pound ; and thus, perhaps, the look which occasionally stole across his daughter's face, so difficult for strangers to understand, and described by other less pretty and consequently less popular girls as "calculating," was inherited. Upon the summer's day of which we write there was good reason for this expression, for both

the young men, who somewhat lazily plied the oars, were engaged in admiring her, and in a way which a few months of *soirées*, dances and at homes had given her the necessary worldly wisdom to interpret aright.

And thus it happened that whilst her mother, several other girls, an elderly lady or two, and some three or four young men were enjoying the luxury of the steam-launch, which was now rapidly overtaking them, Lois was engaged in that delightful pastime (still held sacred to ladies) of balancing the merits of two eligible and rival lovers. They on their part were, she flattered herself, quite unaware of her mind's occupation, and each jealous of every look bestowed upon the other, they said little, but admired and thought much.

They were almost equally well favoured as to looks, neither strikingly handsome, but at the present time almost looking so in their boating attire.

Herbert Causton had money, and Lois, although she would have plenty, rather favoured a judicious acquisition of more, but he was not good-tempered, and scarcely so much of a gentleman as Denzil Morris, who was a more lively companion, and certainly much more admired by other girls, and this was a factor not to be overlooked. He was, moreover, undoubtedly clever, and would be quite a show husband and, as she had just thought to herself, "a credit to any girl."

Such musings as these occupied Lois so entirely that the stiff and restrained efforts of her two attendants to carry on a conversation, and "be pleasant to one another," passed quite unnoticed; and it was not until the launch drew level and set the skiff rocking in its wash that she was recalled to herself.

"Lois, you look deliciously lazy," her younger sister cried out as she passed.

"Hulloa, Morris, thinking of the new drama?" laughed one of the party on the steam-launch. "What's it to be? 'Paddling Some One Else's Canoe' or 'Two's Company——'?" The last of the sentence was lost in the distance amidst the ripple of feminine laughter evoked by the sally.

Lois was aroused but not in the least disturbed by the rather commonplace witticism, so she said:

"I think both of you must have been very lazy, or they would never have overtaken us thus soon. Don't you really think you

could pull a little harder? You look strong enough, I'm sure"—this last with a glance at Denzil Morris' bare and fairly muscular arms: a feminine half-frightened glance, as if strength was an almost incomprehensible quality which might hurt her.

"Very well, Miss Maitland. You steer and we'll see if we cannot overtake them before they land. Pull away, Causton. We've been, as Miss Maitland says, 'horribly lazy.'"

A few strong strokes and the boat gathered way and shot forward with a lip-lap of water at the bow, and Lois dreamily steering in the stern.

The sound of the rippling water, the drops as they fell from the blades of the sculls, and the swirl of the eddies as they swept astern was very soothing, and gradually she fell a-thinking again, and her thoughts were much the same as before. She was a clever girl, and knew perfectly well that both of the men who kept their eyes fixed so upon her face were in love with her, and that Denzil, as she called him so herself, was only waiting for an opportunity to speak.

This dark-haired girl with the oval face, shaded by a large sun-hat, in which a bunch of red poppies and yellow corn nodded, in her cool white dress, with two dark crimson roses coquettishly pinned at her breast, cared a little for him, just a little more than any other, and so she decided he should have his opportunity. It was a love of power that prompted her to this decision, for she did not care for him as he did for her.

A twinge of conscience may have touched her, but she dismissed the thought—she would be very kind to him, kinder than she had been to Johnny Sotheron, poor boy, and she smiled; for Johnny had been very much in earnest and she—well—she not at all. Kinder than she had been to young Estcourt; he was a very foolish young fellow, no doubt, every one said so, but she thought "he had done at least one sensible thing, and had showed good taste," by falling in love with her.

She loved the power her beauty gave; it was a joy to her if heart-breaking and sorrow-giving to others.

Once, it was after Johnny Sotheron's affair, she had lain awake long after she had gone to bed, and had been troubled, for she sought for her heart and could not find it. And for a few moments she lay with a chill upon her, and she almost cried out that she might have one, even if it made her unhappy; but the

cry died upon her lips and the void remained aching less and less, second by second.

A very similar feeling almost stole over her as she sat, on this hot summer's day, furtively watching Denzil Morris' earnest face. There was very little conversation carried on, for she did not wish to talk, and the two men had seemingly lost the power of speech, for the silence was only broken twice or thrice, and then only by a casual remark, until they came in sight of the launch, now close under the bank in search of a good landing-place.

All the party were soon on shore, whilst men from Tucker and Davidson's unpacked the luncheon.

None of the picnics wandered very far, for although hunger suited scarce any of their stations—hunger being, at least in society, essentially vulgar — all were, nevertheless, intensely hungry. At luncheon the two waiters were voted rather a bore, and they became supplemented by several of the gentlemen. Most of the party had split up into little groups, and thus Lois was able to almost monopolize Denzil and Causton. She was very happy, for she loved the sunlight, she always looked well in it, and as yet she was fresh enough to stand its searching rays, besides, most people were happy and merry in it, and she liked happiness and merriment, and hated shade and sadness.

Soon after lunch a ramble in the woods was proposed by the more adventurous spirits of the party, and gradually all strayed off in twos and threes, or small knots of half-a-dozen or so to make the most of a long afternoon and the shade.

Denzil and Causton attached themselves immediately to Lois, and then the three set out in search of flowers. They had gone but a little distance, however, before voices were heard summoning Causton's aid, and thus Lois and Denzil were left to wander on alone. They were soon in the woods, the last of a straggling line, that was quickly being broken more and more, as some or other of the ramblers struck off from the path amongst the trees.

Lois and Denzil had walked on for some distance when the former professed to be tired, saying:

"Isn't it fearfully hot, Mr. Morris? and here is a delightful tree, just the thing to rest against. If you don't mind, I think

I should like to stop a little while, and then we can go on and find the others. How they have the energy to walk at such a rate a day like this puzzles me."

Denzil looked round. They had wandered far enough into the cool shade of the wood to have lost sight of the path altogether, and were, therefore, almost perfectly secure from interruption.

"Very well, Miss Maitland," he replied; "nothing could be nicer, so let us sit down."

Lois seated herself upon the fallen trunk, and Denzil threw himself on the grass beside it. He was vainly endeavouring to find the best way of approaching fair Lois, who sat just above him tapping her daintily-shod feet with her parasol. She was very cool—a great contrast to himself—and chatted away gaily enough; so gaily that he began to misdoubt the signs by which he had fancied her heart to have become an open book to him.

Lois was thinking when he would speak, and what she could possibly say, for in the silence of the wood and after a glance at his face, she had suddenly been seized with a troublesome consciousness that she had gone too far with him—farther indeed than she had intended. This uncomfortable feeling increased, and at last she recognized that, like the boy in the fable, she had raised a spirit that she could not easily lay again.

She left off tapping her shoes suddenly, and nothing broke the silence for several moments. Even the leaves did not rustle, and the voices of the other members of the party had long ago died away in the distance; not a bird twittered, and the tall grass was almost still.

The silence began to terrify her, and she was about to seek refuge in motion, when Denzil rose and stood before her. He had forgotten to pick up his hat, which he had taken off when he threw himself down beside her, and the sun streaming through the boughs fell full upon him as he stood before her pale and calm with an intensity that in others would have heralded a passionate outburst.

Lois saw him; she knew why he was standing before her, and also what would fall from his lips in a moment, but a great fear kept her silent.

At length he spoke, and there was a tremulous vibration

in his voice, such as a harp or violin string gives when strained almost to breaking point.

"Lois. Lois, dearest!" burst from him. "Let me look into your eyes—look at me—you must know how I love you. And you love me, tell me so—oh! tell me that—say I am not mistaken. For it would be a terrible mistake for me."

He was silent for a moment, and looked down upon her, but she did not look up, but sat perfectly still, looking very pale, with bowed head.

"Lois, darling, look up; tell me that I am not mistaken," he cried.

But the only response was a half-stifled sob from the girl.

In a moment he knelt beside her, and strove to take one of her hands, but she pulled it from his grasp as if his touch burned her, saying:

"You will hate me, and oh! I deserve it. I am so sorry, so very sorry, but it is all a mistake."

Denzil was standing again now; every particle of colour had left his face, and there was a look of positive physical suffering in his eyes, such as a sudden and terrible sorrow will sometimes bring.

He stood with his face half-hidden in his hands, whilst Lois sobbed out her confession. She had but little to say and no excuses to make, and she was crying bitterly long before she had finished even that little.

When she prayed his forgiveness, and not till then, he uncovered his face. He was not one to pursue the matter further, even if she had not made it clear to him that it were useless to do so. Falling upon his knees he drew one of her hands away from her face, and in doing it the red roses pinned in her dress dropped, and their petals fell in a crimson shower over her white skirts and thence to the ground; she made no effort to draw her hand away, although she shivered, as she felt his hot kisses imprinted upon it, whilst he assured her again and again that he forgave her.

She intuitively knew that he was noble and true, and that she had played a part far below his in this life drama, but her old self soon reasserted itself, and knowing him to be good and true she believed in his forgiveness, and felt more happy.

Neither spoke. And so after a minute or two of silence, Denzil, who had risen, said, in a voice that was almost steady :

"Shall we return, Miss Maitland, or would you rather rest a little longer?"

Lois raised her face to him, and although she did not speak, the tear-stains appealed to him, and he understood her wish to be left alone a little while.

And so he wandered away blindly into the wood, every now and again stumbling and groping his path with outstretched arms as if he had lost all sense of sight.

It had been a terrible blow to him, a crushing disappointment, but, although a mist had gathered before his eyes and the sun had suddenly set, and memory and sense of almost everything seemed to fail him, no thought of blaming the girl he had just left entered his head.

He did not go very far, but lay down beside a fern-clad bank to think.

All the beauty of the trees, the sky, the light and shade, which had charmed him an hour before in a way they had never done before, now seemed blotted out ; he was dazed by the sudden fall of his castles in the air and overwhelming destruction of his hopes.

He did try to think at first, but soon gave up doing so, and 'twas well, for with rest came a certain amount of composure.

Lois sat still after he had left her. She was not crying now, but she felt utterly miserable, and more unhappy than she had ever been before.

For the first time since she had left girlhood behind her she had experienced an uncomfortable feeling that she was heartless, and had done another a cruel wrong. But her disposition was too changeable, too volatile, for such a fit of repentance to last long, and when Denzil Morris returned she had recovered her composure sufficiently to be cruelly kind to him.

Neither Lois nor Denzil spoke until they rejoined some of the party, who happened to be returning for tea ; fortunately too gay and happy to notice that anything unusual had occurred. Denzil had by now quite recovered control of himself, and Lois felt not a little relieved when she furtively glanced at him to find this was the case. After a commonplace remark or two he resigned his place to Causton, who came up, and betook himself to the company of the younger members of the party.

When the time came for the return, Lois chose to stay on board the launch.

In the fun and merriment of the return journey, Lois and Denzil found a refuge from inquisitive eyes, and when they landed at Kingston, some to return to Waterloo by train, they had recovered sufficiently to parry the banter and inquiries as to where their walk had led them, with success.

PART II.

FAME.

“Refuge of hope, the harbinger of truth,
Handmaid of heaven, virtue’s skilful guide,
The life of life, the ages’ springing youth,
Triumph of joy, eternity’s fair bride.

* * * * *

The star by which men to the stars do climb.”

—*Drayton.*

It was some weeks later ere Lois and Denzil again met, and she had as yet scarcely recovered from the knowledge which had suddenly come to her on that hot summer’s afternoon; the strange feeling that she was a woman now, and that the world would hold her more responsible for the harm and sorrow her thoughtlessness might cause.

Denzil noticed that a change had come over her, and that she avoided him and his society as much as possible. He was hurt, but not surprised, as he felt certain that for her to conceal what had occurred from eyes always ready to note, was a more difficult task than for him.

He saw very little of her, and although he dined once or twice at Cadogan Place, it always happened that he was deputed to “take in” some guest and not her.

Gradually he went out less and less often, and invitations were declined in larger numbers, and as he was popular and sought after, people began to wonder what had become of him.

If he were questioned or quizzed at the “Dramatic,” he said very little beyond a hint of business. Once, when fairly brought to bay on the subject of his ever-increasing social delinquencies by his greatest friend, who had been to college with him, and had for some time shared his rooms, he did offer an explanation.

“The reason I don’t go out much, Hazlett, is simply I haven’t

the time. I am working night and day at that new piece of mine. It's taking all my thought and energies. I have no time for social duties."

"It is taking more than all your energies, Denzil. You're looking wretchedly ill, and if you don't take care you will have a breakdown. I hear that you don't even go to the Maitlands' now ; Mrs. Maitland was only yesterday referring to it."

"It's no use your talking, Hazlett ; when I've finished the play, I shall take a long rest : go abroad, very likely."

"Mind, Denzil, I've warned you, and you'll be a fool if you don't take my advice ; that's all I've got to say."

"Thanks, old boy, but you were always a bit of a croaker. Don't you remember the fellows used to dub you 'nurse' ?"

"By the way, have you seen Causton lately, Hazlett ?"

"No, not since a month or two ago. I believe he is stopping at a place in the north. I thought there was something up between him and Lois Maitland, but I suppose I must have been mistaken."

"Why, Denzil, what in the world's the matter ?"

Denzil Morris had sunk into a chair, and with his face very white, was pressing his hand to his forehead, as if to clear away a gathering mist.

"Oh, nothing. Only I'm rather seedy this morning. I hardly got any rest last night."

"Just what I told you ! You're overworked. I shall come and look after you a bit, whether you like it or not. Come ! You had better go home."

* * * * *

Denzil Morris had his rooms in Victoria Street, Westminster, only a few minutes' drive from the "Dramatic."

Hazlett threw himself into a chair, and contemplated the confusion with the air of bailiff in charge. After a moment or two's silence, between the puffs of his cigar, he began a running comment, which Denzil listened to with closed eyes, as he reclined in a deck chair.

"Well ! Of all the untidy beggars I ever came across, Denzil, you beat all. What's this ?" kicking over a pile of newspapers which lay within reach, beside a writing-table. "How in the name of goodness do you manage to find things ? If I were to let my papers and letters get into such a muddling confusion,

I should never have another brief. Who's that over there?" pointing to a photo in a silver frame which stood on the mantelpiece. "Lois Maitland, by Jingo! So there's something in it after all, is there?"

Denzil made no reply, but still lay with closed eyes, and at length Hazlett seemed to see rest was what he wanted and not rousing. So he puffed away in silence, turning over the pages of a loosely-bound volume of press cuttings. At length Denzil fell asleep, and then he, seeing this, stole quietly away, meaning to look in again later on.

It was quite dark when the sleeper awoke, startled into consciousness by the heavy boom of Big Ben from the clock tower hard by. The gas was lighted in the streets, and a constant stream of carriages and people threw strange shadows on road and pavements. He generally dined at one of his clubs, but to-night he was too tired, and, moreover, felt he had wasted enough of the evening already; so he rang the bell, determining to make the best of what he could get in the house.

He gave his orders and then, although feeling very disinclined for work, he sat down with the intention of finishing the few remaining lines of his play before going to bed.

The table was covered with books of reference, cuttings (not yet collated) from papers, the full reports of a recent sensational trial, note-books and sketch-books, containing drawings of stage costumes, seemingly without end. Papers, letters, magazines and theatrical notices strewed the floor, which, to a strange eye, would present an appearance of inextricable confusion.

He worked on, slowly covering the pages, absorbed in his task, and fast losing in it the appetite for the dinner which had been brought and was now rapidly cooling upon a table near the fire.

At length, however, he rose and took a mouthful or two of food, and then, returning to his desk, worked on as before. Hour after hour he wrote, until the blackness of midnight fell over the city, till the chill which precedes the dawn caused him to shiver. And then the last page was covered, the last word written, and the "Broken Vow," by which, he felt, he would stand or fall, was finished.

He did not rise, but leant forward with his arms upon the table and his head resting upon them.

Next morning, the porter who called him found him thus, and muttered to himself: "This sort o' thing can't go on for ever, and Mr. Morris, he's a over-working himself," but, as this was not the first time he had found him of a morning sleeping at his desk lately, he made no remark to the sleeper.

* * * * *

A few months later and the "Broken Vow" was placarded all over London, for Denzil Morris' play, after being speedily returned by two managers, had found a home at the Athenic, and was now soon to be produced.

It was being anticipated with an unusual amount of interest, for the manager of the Athenic let it be widely known that he thought it a "good thing," and a play with money in it.

At last the night came. The house was crowded. In one of the boxes sat Lois Maitland, with her mother and father. She was very excited, more so than she could account for; and she hung on every movement and word of the players with an intensity that soon made her lose consciousness of aught else. In one of the side boxes, with the crimson curtains partly drawn, sat the author and his friend, Charles Hazlett—the one almost consumed by anxiety; the other, who recognized that the play was already a great success, endeavouring to calm and cheer his excitable companion.

The last scene was half-way through when the door opened and the manager entered. He was very much excited, but he said little, only:

"Morris, my dear fellow, we have scored a big success. The 'Broken Vow' will be more even than *the* play of the season. Come! They will be calling for you in a few minutes."

"I can't face them, Bolton; it's no use. I am quite knocked up. I hardly know where I am. I really can't."

"Nonsense, my dear fellow!" said the manager. "Here, Hazlett, you help me. He *must* come."

Between the two of them they managed to half drag, half lead him to the wings.

The curtain fell on the last scene, and amidst the enthusiastic applause Lois heard the call of, "Author." Although she was very pale now, and something she could not stay to name or identify kept throbbing in her heart, she leant forward in the box.

He was famous! He whom she had scorned—whose love she had treated as an idle thought, pleasant and flattering to her self-esteem, no doubt, but scarce worthy of consideration. And now the thoughts crowded thick and hot into her brain—that she might have shared his triumph, his joys, his sorrows, his fame.

She was very human, after all, and her heart was neither the icy lump she had fancied, nor the unbreakable thing her women friends had often covertly hinted.

The applause and calls for the well-known name seemed to deafen her. She trembled, and then, as the familiar figure came hesitatingly before the curtain, a mist clouded her sight.

But one glance was sufficient to make her aware that he was very ill. And after this she sat very still with the tears—girlish tears—of remorse and sympathy welling up into her eyes. She sat with her gaze fixed upon him and with a chill feeling at her heart.

He had been there but a moment or two before she saw him stumble and fall forward, and then everything became misty to her and indistinct; the floor seemed to be revolving beneath her feet; there was a confused murmur in her ears, and then the faces around her faded from her sight.

* * * * *

PART III.

SUCCESS AND ITS EPILOGUE.

“The day drags through, though storms keep out the sun;
And thus the heart will break, yet brokenly live on.”

—Byron.

It was with a dull sense of pain and confusion of mind that Lois awoke next morning, for she had scarcely regained consciousness even when in her own room, and it was still some time before she could recall anything that had occurred the night before.

At length, however, the scene in the theatre came back to her, and with it an intense longing to know how it fared with Denzil Morris, and the colour stole again into her face as she thought of him.

When she went downstairs she eagerly scanned the papers for news, and the flush deepened as she read the following notice in the *Daily Sun*:

“ ‘THE BROKEN VOW’ AT THE ATHENIC THEATRE.

“It will be a severe shock to most playgoers, and indeed to those of the public generally who value what is true and good in art and human nature, to learn that Mr. Denzil Morris, the talented and popular young dramatist, the author of what will probably be one of the greatest dramatic successes of the present decade, is laid low by paralysis. It appears, from the scanty information which we have been able to obtain, that Mr. Morris has latterly been terribly over-worked, and rest has, for a long time past, been the imperative command of his medical man. No one, however, expected the end of his strength was so near. If the ‘Broken Vow,’ which last night marked the commencement of a new epoch in the British Drama of the highest type, warranted unfavourable criticism, the sad event which marked its production would silence all captious analysis. But, beyond a few inevitable ‘slips,’ which are rarely, if ever, absent from a first night, the ‘Broken Vow’ is a noble piece of dramatic construction. Human passion and pathos play their parts with a vividness and reality that took the house and the hearts of the large audience simply by storm. The nobility of Thomas Evan-son, and the winning sweetness of Madge Cashel, would alone place the piece far in the front rank; but there are other characters—Denis Crawshaw, Alan Gordon and Millicent Leigh, notably—of almost equal merit and interest. The wild scene of Millicent’s death, the interview between Madge Cashel and Thomas Evan-son, and the scene at the burning of Blair Castle, caused many eyes to grow suspiciously dim around us, and a perfect hush to fall upon the large assembly.

“At the fall of the curtain there was a dead silence of perhaps a minute, so intense had been the strain; and then, amidst a confused murmur of voices, we could catch the words ‘Denzil Morris’ and ‘Author.’ In an instant or two the murmur had become an enthusiastic roar, people standing up in their places, so great was their excitement.

“At last Mr. Morris, accompanied by Mr. Bolton, appeared before the curtain, and we immediately noticed that he was looking miserably ill, pale and careworn. The audience’s enthusiasm knew no bounds, and round after round of applause greeted him when, suddenly, as he was in the act of again bowing his acknowledgments, his face took a deathly pallor and

he stumbled forward. Mr. Bolton, however, 'caught him in his arms, and, amidst a scene of wild but almost instantly suppressed excitement, he was borne behind the curtain.

"The sudden hush which fell upon the audience was startling in its intensity, and for a time no one sought to move. It was generally thought that Mr. Morris' indisposition would prove to be nothing more serious than a fainting fit, and it was not until Mr. Bolton's reappearance that the truth became known. The audience, in accordance with his request, slowly dispersed without further demonstration.

"Upon inquiry just before going to press we regret to learn Mr. Morris still remains unconscious. A further report of the 'Broken Vow,' with the cast, appears elsewhere."

When Lois had finished reading the foregoing, she sat down covering her face with her hand. She did not cry, for no tears would come, but she remained perfectly still with an aching heart, waiting for the hour (which seemed a lifetime) when her mother, who had driven to Victoria Street, would return with the latest news.

It was late when Mrs. Maitland returned, and Lois met her in the hall.

"Lois, dear, you will be glad to hear Mr. Morris is a little better, but not yet out of danger. Come with me into my room; I wish to speak to you."

When they were alone, Mrs. Maitland said :

"Lois, you must tell me everything. I think I guessed your secret last night."

"I will tell you all—everything, mother. Oh! how he must have despised and hated me, and I hate and despise myself a thousand times."

"No, Lois; he does not hate you," said Mrs. Maitland; "his mother and sister are already there, Mr. Hazlett telegraphed for them, and she told me she suspected something, although he is speechless, and so white and still."

Lois was crying bitterly by now, and it was a long time before her mother could calm her. But both mother and daughter had always understood one another, and the talk did Lois more good than anything else could have done.

* * * * *

Three days later the Maitlands' carriage drew up at Denzil

Morris' chambers in Victoria Street, and Lois and her mother alighted. They were shown into his room, now no longer littered with books and papers, for a sister had laid ruthless, if tidy, hands upon them, and neatness for once prevailed. Lois was very shy, and almost felt her courage fail her when Mrs. Morris, looking very ill and troubled, entered.

"My dear, the doctor says you may see him, only for a moment or two, though. He has been looking for you, I am sure of it, although he cannot speak your name."

The Lois who followed Denzil's mother into the darkened room was very different from the girl of a few short months ago. Nervousness had replaced self-possession, and with the awakening of her heart, some of the dignity of a truer, purer womanhood had crept over her; she was pale, too, and the lines beneath her eyes spoke more eloquently to Mrs. Morris' heart than any words could have done.

All Lois saw was Denzil's face as he lay quite still with closed eyes in the half-gloom, and she had knelt down at the bedside with her head bowed over the thin hand that lay powerless on the coverlet, before he opened them.

At first he looked at her without recognition, and then his eyes seemed to know her, and a flush of faint colour suffused his cheeks. There was a struggle for speech, and when the word "Lois" broke from his lips, she felt the useless hand grasp hers with renewed power.

"Denzil, can you ever forgive me?" the words were spoken very pleadingly and low.

There was no need for her to hear the answer, though it came, faint, but with no hesitation, "Yes." And then she gazed upon his pale face, on which there rested the calm of forgiveness and infinite love.

"The House that Jack Built."

By DARLEY DALE,

Author of "FAIR KATHERINE," "THE VILLAGE BLACKSMITH," etc.

CHAPTER XX.

THE FLOWING TIDE COMES IN.

"AMY, dear, I must drive in to St. Helier's to-day. The girls have nothing to wear. I want to choose their new dresses. Will you come with me?" said Miss Keppel, one morning in May, to her niece.

"No, thank you, auntie. Surely Aunt Dorcas and Aunt Lydia can choose their own dresses; they are old enough," said Mrs. Lockwood.

"My dear child, I never let them do that. Lydia is apt to dress too girlishly if left to herself, and there is no saying what solecism Dorcas would not commit if I did not look after her. I must go. Do you mind being left alone?"

"Not in the least. I shall sketch, very likely," said Amy.

Mrs. Lockwood and Miss Keppel were staying at Plemont, a high point on the north-west corner of the island. Amy was not very well, and the doctor had recommended the bracing air of Plemont for her and the baby for a week or two. So she was living with Miss Keppel, the nurse and the baby at the hotel there for a fortnight. It was now early May, and as the tourist season had not yet begun they had the hotel to themselves, and the caves for which Plemont is celebrated also, generally speaking, though already picnic parties had begun.

Jack's regiment had been gone nearly six months; he had been depressed and not very well all the winter and spring, and though he had been out to every party with his wife, the gulf between them was wider than ever.

Jack had been outwardly a pattern husband, most attentive and kind, but really as cold as ice, and Amy felt her refusal to go to India had lost her what affection Jack had ever had for her.

He was a disappointed man, and was becoming a morose one also. He hated Jersey and the idle life and its constant round of gaiety, the sameness of which palled on him.

He longed for a wider sphere in which to live and move and have his being ; the island seemed to grow smaller daily, and he felt more and more "cabined, cribbed, confined" in it.

He missed his own regiment and brother officers, and if it had not been for Major Graham, who had also exchanged, wishing for his children's sake to remain in Jersey, he would have had no real friend to confide in.

The colonel of the new regiment was a very disagreeable man, and it required all Jack's tact and talent to keep in with him. So what with his blighted career, his present fretting duties, his impatience of the mill of gaiety he was obliged to tread, there was perhaps some excuse for his bad temper.

Amy, too, had had her troubles. Her debts were increasing, and with them her fear lest her husband should hear of them ; but as the regiment was to stay two years, the tradespeople were content not to press for payment, and Amy's principal creditor, her dressmaker, was quieted by a sop of ten pounds every quarter.

Mrs. Lockwood was still the rage, she had several admirers in the new regiment, but on her too society and parties began to pall somewhat, and she was now possessed by an intense longing to win the love of one man, one who of all her admirers was the least inclined to give it her, and that man was her husband.

It would not be true to say she was in love with him, she was a long way off that ; it was doubtful if she ever could or would be in love with any one but herself ; but at any rate she respected and admired him, and her love of conquest made her covet his love.

She could not bear the thought that he would have been a happier man had he married Joy, yet she knew it was the truth ; the deep-set melancholy of his face annoyed more than it pained her, it was a reproach to her ; his coldness piqued her vanity if her nature was not deep enough to be actually wounded by it ; his love for his tiny daughter, which was becoming the passion of his life, roused her jealousy, and she almost hated the tiny baby in whose presence her husband's stern features would relax, and his sad eyes light up with a smile she had never awakened in them.

Little Gladys already knew her father's step and voice, and would try to jump out of her foster-mother's arms at the sound of them, and it was more to remove the child from her father than for its own sake that Amy consented to take it to Plemont with her. But she saw nothing of it except for one hour during the day, the nurse's dinner hour, when she took care of it.

"What time is it high water to-day?" asked Mrs. Lockwood of the hotel-keeper, as she set off on a sketching expedition, after Miss Keppel had driven off, taking the nurse and baby with her.

"At three o'clock, madam."

"Then I shall be safe in the caves till half-past twelve. We will lunch at two to-day," said Amy, as she started for the beach, meaning to make a sketch of the celebrated Needle Rock cave.

That same May morning Jack Lockwood was inspired with the idea of riding out to see his wife; Major Graham rather wished to send his children out to Plemont for a week, and was coming out that afternoon to see if Amy, who was not fond of children, would have any objection; so Jack came first as a pioneer.

On reaching the hotel Mr. Lockwood found his wife was gone to the beach, so he followed her, sauntering slowly down the winding path which leads over the gorse-covered cliffs to the sands and caves.

The sun shone brilliantly; the cloudless sky was magnificently blue, the sea bluer than the sky, with purple shadows and green lights on it; it was past the half-tide, and the sea was rolling in in crested waves, whose white foam sparkled like frost diamonds in the sunlight.

Far away the blue sea melted in a soft white haze into the blue sky; but closer inland the colours were more brilliant, and as Jack looked up from the green cliffs, studded with the great white stars of the marguerites and the deep golden blossoms of the gorse, to the emerald sea breaking in dazzling white foam on the yellow sands and playing round the red granite rocks which line the bay, he was glad his wife was enjoying all this beauty.

He sauntered slowly down the winding path and then clambered over the rocks till he stood in the bay with the Needle Rock cave on his left.

"Beauty is cheap here; it is one of the few advantages the place possesses," he thought, as he wandered into the cave and

looked at the pointed granite pillar called the Needle Rock, which stands at its entrance, and admired the red walls of the cave, with the tufts of brilliant green fronds of the asplenium marinum fern growing above high-water mark in the roof.

He was in no hurry, so he lighted a cigar, and sitting down on a rock smoked it, watching the beautiful sea the while, as the waves danced among the rocks, throwing their arms round some, gently touching those nearer land with their spray, laughing merrily, and alas ! cruelly also, all the while.

Presently he rose, and clambering over the rocks which lie at the entrance of the cave, he found to his surprise, but not at all to his alarm, that the sea had advanced so that he could not return by the way he came unless he was prepared to get wet through, for it was possible yet to get back at the cost of a wetting.

But he had on a new suit of clothes and did not wish to spoil them unnecessarily, so glancing across the bay he decided to make for the opposite side of it and find some place to clamber up over the cliffs. The cliffs looked to be sheer precipice at this distance, but as he knew the distance was very deceptive, they were probably less steep than they looked ; so he set off across the sands.

"I must have missed Amy, I don't see any sign of her," he thought as he crossed the little bay, on the opposite side of which were some other caves.

"I have never been inside those caves; I wonder what they are like," thought Jack, turning into them when he reached them.

But at the entrance of the first cave he paused, for before him, seated on a camp stool, her hat on the sand by her feet, a little sketching block on her knees, her head pillowed against the granite rock, fair and beautiful as the day, sat his wife fast asleep.

His step woke her, and opening her eyes with a start, Amy exclaimed :

"Why, Jack, what brings you here?"

"I came over to luncheon, but it is quite a chance I found you here, Amy ; I could not get back by the steps, so I——"

"What !" interrupted Amy, starting up and looking across the bay at the sea, which was now washing over the rocks Jack had clambered down to reach the bay.

"My God, we are cut off! we can't get back this way!" she exclaimed.

"Nonsense; surely we can climb up over these cliffs," said Jack, beginning to be alarmed.

"We can't, it is sheer precipice, and the sea washes completely up to it. That way you came is the only way down. What is the time?" said Amy, turning pale with fear.

"A little past one," said Jack. "When is it high water?" he added.

"At three. It is never safe after the half-tide. What a fool I was to go to sleep! Oh! what shall we do—what shall we do? Look, Jack, the sands will soon be covered. Unless some one rescues us we are lost!" exclaimed Amy.

And she looked at the cruel waves dancing towards her with eyes wide with terror, for she knew that dance was the dance of death; and yet the sun shone gloriously, the blue sky was cloudless, the waves laughed wildly and tossed their foaming crests in an ecstasy of joy, as if mocking the young husband and his beautiful wife.

"We can't be lost, Amy. Stay here while I go and see if there is not some place we can climb up," said Jack, who, though he had no particular love of life, had no wish to die in this way.

"No, no! don't leave me! Let me come too. I can't die alone—I won't be left!" said Amy, clutching hold of Jack's arm.

"I won't leave you, Amy; but there is no fear of death. At the worst we can take refuge in the cave," said Jack gravely but tenderly, for his wife's terror touched him.

"The cave is dark and horrible—we should be suffocated. I would rather be drowned out here in the sunshine. They say drowning is painless," said Amy, pulling Jack away from the cave.

"We won't go there unless we are obliged," said Jack, who was eagerly scanning the cliffs, which were still accessible, to see if it were possible to scale them.

"There is nothing for it but the cave, Amy. We must take refuge there when the sea drives us into it. I will go and explore it and see if it seems safe. Sit down on this rock till I come out," said Jack, when he had satisfied himself this was the only thing to be done.

The cave was a fairly large one. It receded for about fifteen feet and then turned abruptly to the right, where it ended in a funnel-shaped passage, tapering towards the extreme end. By

the light of a fusee, Jack saw that at the far end there was a narrow ledge of rock about three feet from the ground, and by standing on this ledge and propping himself up by his arms against the opposite wall, he thought it would be possible to keep dry ; for, on examining the walls carefully, he did not think the sea came up to the end of the cave.

While he was thus engaged, Amy was watching the relentless sea, now coming close to the rock on which she was sitting, and calculating that in another half-hour they would be driven inside the cave.

How horrible it would be !

"It is all right, Amy ; we can take shelter there. I don't think the tide reaches the far end, and I don't think we shall have very long to spend there. Let me see, it is a quarter to two ; high water at three—two hours at the outside for us in the cave, and then we shall have another two hours before we can get back from the beach. We shall be ready for dinner by six this evening instead of eight," said Jack, anxious to cheer his wife.

Amy did not reply for a moment, but, turning her pale face, gazed on the waves, which now threatened every moment to wash round her feet.

It was so bright and beautiful there in the sunlight, it was scarcely possible to believe it would be death to remain there, that in less than half-an-hour the sea would be washing into the cave ; and yet she knew it was true. The cave was their only hope, and the cave was a horrible alternative.

As she realized that in a few minutes they would be driven by the relentless waves into the shelter of the cave, a sense of impotent rage took possession of her. She was angry with herself, with Jack, with the sea, with the people who did not come to rescue them, with everything, with everybody, and she burst into a fit of childish tears, crying between her sobs :

"Why did I come to this dreadful place ? Why did you not wake me sooner ? Why does not some one come and save us ? It is a shame, a cruel, cruel shame that I should die in this way !"

"You will not die, Amy dear ; I will save you if it is possible," said Jack kindly, as a bigger wave than the previous ones washed round the rock Amy was sitting on, the spray falling on her face.

Amy shrieked, and, jumping off the rock, clung to her husband, who put his arm round her and led her towards the cave.

"Don't be frightened, dear ; we shall be safe enough here. Come inside and let us sit down and time it. There is just an hour before the tide turns."

Amy, sobbing pitifully, let him do as he pleased with her. He was very gentle and tender ; he found as comfortable a place as the cave offered for her, and, putting his arm round her, pillowed her head on his shoulder and did his best to reassure her fears.

There they sat for half-an-hour, the sea washing into the cave now, every wave threatening to drive them round into the dark part of the cave ; and as Amy felt her husband's arms round her, her conscience smote her. Should she make a clean breast of it and tell him of her debts ?

Would she ever have a more favourable opportunity than now, with death staring them in the face ?

Would he ever be so disposed to forgive her ? Had she the courage to tell him ?

She would have to speak loud, for the sea was making such a noise ; but otherwise it would not be so difficult. For with death so close at hand surely Jack would look upon debt as a very minor evil ; while it would be easier to die with a light conscience, if die she must.

But no, she could not tell him ; and yet it would be better for her and better for him that they should both perish than that they should live and he remain in ignorance of it.

While she hesitated, the splash of a breaking wave warned them to move round into the dark part of the cave.

"Oh ! let us go out and die in the sunshine. We shall be suffocated here," said Amy.

This was precisely what Jack feared might happen, but he made light of it.

"Not we. It is half-past two now ; the tide won't come up much higher," he answered.

The noise of the sea was so loud that they had to shout to each other, and it was quite dark in this part of the cave. It was enough to terrify a strong man—no wonder Amy was almost dead with fear. She clung to Jack in an agony of terror, as wave after wave broke in the mouth of the cave and the sea washed up the funnel, each wave coming nearer and nearer to

the hapless pair, who stood leaning against the wall at the furthest end.

The noise of the breaking waves was deafening, it echoed and re-echoed in the cave and was louder than any thunder ; the darkness, too, was very terrible.

Presently Jack struck a light and looked at his watch.

It was a quarter to three.

"Courage, Amy, only a quarter of an hour more," he shouted into his trembling wife's ear.

As he spoke the sea washed round their feet and he feared that a stronger wave would sweep them away into the outer cave, so he lifted Amy on to the narrow ledge of rock and, climbing up himself, held her with his left arm, while with his right hand he supported himself against the opposite wall, for the cave was so narrow here that he was able easily to do so.

Amy was now so exhausted that unless he had held her up firmly with his left arm she would have fallen, and he dreaded every moment he should feel her arms, which were round his neck, relax, and find her unconscious and a dead weight in his arms.

"I am counting the minutes, Amy ; we have only seven more before the tide turns," he shouted, but he could not be certain his calculation was correct.

Every moment Amy seemed to get heavier, and his arms ached so, he feared he would not have the strength to hold her up much longer ; but each time he shouted some word of encouragement he felt her grasp of him tighten.

"Three more minutes," he shouted.

Suddenly a wave struck the side of his face and the force of it caused him to waver on his perch.

Was it the tidal wave or would the next wave be higher and stronger ?

If it were he could not withstand it.

He stooped and kissed his wife, and while he whispered, "Courage," his heart beat high, for he felt another wave like the last would wash them into eternity.

In spite of the danger, nay because of it, he was enjoying the adventure ; he felt he was fighting against tremendous odds, he was heavily handicapped by Amy, and he enjoyed the battle ; it was life to which the daily routine of his duties was mere existence.

Death must come some day, if it came now he would meet it like a man, but he would first fight his hardest for life, for life at its bitterest is sweeter than death.

Fear death? not he; he feared nothing in this world, and as for the next, well, he knew little enough about it, and thought less; he would do his duty here and trust all would come right hereafter.

Fighting was his calling; no matter in what form the enemy came, an advancing army or the advancing tide, he was ready to meet it and fight for his life.

"One fight more, the last and the best." As that last insolent wave struck his face his brain reeled with anger; it was as though the arch-fiend had mockingly dealt him a blow, and he felt as men say they have felt when face to face with the foe, not like men, but like animals lusting for blood, mad with anger. Had his enemy been human he would have fought like a tiger; as it was he longed to wrestle breast to breast with these cruel waves, to jump into the sea and fight there for his life.

If it had not been for Amy he would have done so in the first instance; nay, if the next wave were as insolent as the last, he would do so now with her in his arms; die they must in that case, but he would die fighting; he was nothing if not a soldier.

And Amy, of what was she thinking as she stood in her husband's arms, she and he, breast to breast and heart to heart, though their souls were so far asunder? Not of death, but of love.

Yes, of love; for in that cave with hell yawning beneath her she had found heaven; for to her henceforth Jack's arms would be heaven, since the spray that roused his anger woke her sleeping soul, and she found that she loved him.

He did not love her, she knew; she had deceived him so cruelly perhaps he never would love her; but he was dying for her; he could have saved himself had he left her; that too she knew; but he had chosen to stay with her, little as she deserved it. How brave he was, this husband of hers whom she so tardily learnt to love, whom, perhaps, she would never have loved but for this incident, which showed her how brave and noble he was. She knew no one else who would have acted like this after the way she had treated him.

Her eyes had hitherto been blinded, but now, when she saw how superior he was to all her admirers, she loved him, urged by that law which decrees:

“We needs must love the highest when we see it, not Lancelot, nor another.”

He was her King Arthur ; was it too late that she loved him ?

She had not sinned like Guinevere ; was there not a place of repentance for her ?

She had ever been true to him in deed if false in word, when she stole him from Joy, but now she was his : body, soul and spirit if he would have her ; but, alas, the darkness of that cave was as light compared with the black cloud that divided their souls.

As he bent over her and whispered, “Courage,” her lips met his, and then her head fell back on his shoulder, and she fainted, not with fear of death as he imagined, but with exhaustion born of emotion, not of physical fatigue.

CHAPTER XXI.

AMY LOSES AN OPPORTUNITY.

“COURAGE,” was the last word Jack Lockwood spoke, as he stood with aching arms holding Amy up and supporting himself till the next wave should come and wash them off their perch, or warn him to jump in and die fighting amid the deafening roar of the sea, louder than any thunder as it was ; in utter darkness, with every muscle strained, every nerve quivering, he waited, expecting every instant to feel another wave stronger than the last break over them.

He counted fifty, and it did not come. The waves were breaking and tossing themselves far up the funnel of the cave, but he felt no more spray on his face.

He counted one hundred, and he thought he had now only a few more seconds to wait. The sea roared loudly as ever. Amy’s arms relaxed their hold on his neck as she fainted ; and her head sank on to his breast ; but he managed still to hold her up. It could only be for a few more seconds ; he was glad she was unconscious, she would be spared the pain of death.

He counted one hundred and fifty, and still no wave dared to touch a hair of his head again.

He counted two hundred, and a wild hope rose in his breast that the danger was past. This hope gave him fresh strength, and he raised his unconscious wife a trifle higher in his arms.

He counted three hundred, and no wave reached him, and his hope grew stronger and stronger.

Surely, surely the tide had turned ; the moaning sea was moaning because deprived of its prey. His head felt numbed by the awful noise ; the darkness weighed as heavily on his mind as his unconscious burden on his arms, but every second his hope grew stronger and stronger, till when he reached five hundred, the hope amounted to certainty.

The tide had turned.

Joy, higher than the rising tide, wilder than the surging waves, deeper than the fathomless sea, rose in his breast ; for the capacity for suffering and for enjoyment of one human soul is infinite : the ocean has its bounds, but there is no limit to joy such as Jack Lockwood now felt, the joy of life. Exhausted as he was, he felt new strength in his tired limbs ; a few more minutes and he could jump off his perch and stand on the floor of the cave ; the sea still washed up there, but he was so wet it would not matter. He did not mind the deafening noise now ; it seemed to him the sea was rejoicing at his escape ; if only he could make Amy hear the good news, but she was still unconscious.

A minute or two later he ventured to step off the ledge on to the sand, from which the sea was now receding, though the foam after each wave broke, still washed up almost to the end of the cave. He had Amy in his arms, but regardless of the water, the first thing he did was to place her flat on her back, knowing the recumbent position would bring her round almost immediately ; then he bent over her and she gave a little shiver ; he whispered loudly in her ear :

"We are saved, my darling."

The epithet was strange as it was sweet to Amy, coming from his lips ; but in the excitement of the moment it was no exaggerated expression. She was dear to him just then ; the peril they had shared drew them together ; he almost loved her.

"Has the tide turned ?" said Amy.

"Yes ; in another ten minutes we can get into the other cave ; I could get there now if I waded," said Jack.

He did not add that at any time he could have saved himself by swimming had he been alone ; but Amy had from the first suspected as much ; she knew he had risked his own life to save her, preferring to die with her rather than live without her. At the same time she knew it was his sense of chivalry and duty which made him do this ; it was not love ; it was *noblesse oblige*.

"Lift me up, my feet are wet and cold," said Amy ; and Jack raised her and placed her in a sitting position with her back resting against the wall of the cave ; her skirts were wet, and he wrung the water out of them as well as he could in the darkness, which was lessening as the sea went down, and left a wider opening at the mouth of the outer cave for the light to enter by.

"There, now I can get into the other cave, I believe ; shall I go and try ?" said Jack, who was longing to see daylight again.

"Yes, but be quick back," said Amy.

So Jack splashed through the sea to the outer cave, where he found the water still knee deep, but it was going down very rapidly ; from here he could look across the sunlit sea, and gaze at the blue patch of heaven visible at the mouth of the cave, and never had sea or sky seemed so beautiful as they did to him then. He shouted with delight and threw up his arms at the welcome sight, and then he went back to his wife.

"It is glorious to see the light again ; will you come, Amy ? I will carry you if you will," he said joyfully, and his joy was infectious. Amy caught it, and as she longed to get out of the darkness, he picked her up and carried her to the entrance of the outer cave.

The noise was very much less here, and there was no need to shout at each other, and the sweet daylight was almost as welcome to Amy as to Jack.

"What is the time, Jack ?"

"Take my watch out and look," said Jack, for his hands were occupied in holding his wife.

It was half-past three.

"We have another hour before we can get out of this cave yet. I can stand, Jack ; my feet are wet through, so it won't matter ; the sea won't come above my boots," said Amy.

Jack put her on to the ground again, for light as she was his arms ached, and said anxiously :

"Amy, I hope you won't be ill after this ; I shall send for the doctor as soon as we get back to the hotel."

"I wonder they don't come and look for us ; I left word I was going to the caves ; Aunt Sophy must be back," said Amy.

She had scarcely finished speaking when a boat hove in sight containing Major Graham and a fisherman.

"Hulloa ! Hi ! Here we are !" shouted Jack, and the men

peering into the darkness of the cave, were attracted by Amy's cream serge dress, and shouting in reply rowed towards the cave.

"It is dear old Graham. God bless him," said Jack as the boat came nearer and nearer, until finally it was rowed into the cave.

"Great heavens! Lockwood, are you here? And Mrs. Lockwood too? Thank God, you are alive!" exclaimed Major Graham.

"Thank God it was a neap tide, or you would never have come out of that cave alive, sir," said the fisherman, who was steering his boat as close to Jack and Amy as possible.

And then there were broken sentences of relief and congratulation, and something very like sobs from both men, while Amy cried like a child.

"We have had the narrowest possible escape as it is. I quite gave us up for lost at one time. See, we have scarcely a dry thread on us," said Jack.

"My dearest fellow! I am so delighted to have found you and poor Mrs. Lockwood. Here, let me lift her into the boat," said Major Graham, when they were all three calmer.

"No need, sir; I'll get her close to the lady directly," said the fisherman, and in another minute or two Jack and Amy were safe in the boat, and as they rowed ashore Jack described their adventure.

They had a steep climb after they landed, and Amy was so exhausted that Major Graham and Jack between them carried her a great part of the way, and as soon as they reached the hotel Amy went to bed, and Jack rode straight back to St. Helier's with Major Graham, and sent the doctor out to see his wife.

Happily, the adventure did Amy no harm. She was none the worse for it, and quite able to hold a levee the next day, when, as Miss Keppel said, "all the island drove out to inquire for her."

Among these visitors was Mr. Stanley Hyde, the gentleman whom Amy found it so hard to suppress; but not content with coming once, he came the next day, and the next, in spite of the very cool reception he met with.

"If Jack knew it he would horsewhip him, I believe. What am I to do, Aunt Sophy? There will be no end of gossip if people know this man drives out here every day to see me, and I

dare not tell the hotel people to say 'not at home,' as I would order my own servants to do. I do wish the man would not be such a fool. I am certain Jack will have a row with him before we leave," said Amy on the fourth day, when to avoid their unwelcome guest they had gone for a drive to another bay.

"I think the best plan will be to go home at the end of the week," suggested Miss Keppel.

"I suppose it will, and I am sorry, for Jack won't let me go out to any parties till after this baby is born, and I would rather be here."

"My dear Amy, you can't leave your husband alone till August, nor can I leave the girls so long as that," said Miss Keppel.

Amy pouted, and muttered, "Bother the girls," but she went back to her house at the end of the week, secretly very glad to go, for she longed to be with her husband, but she was coy as a shy maiden, and did not wish Miss Keppel to guess she loved him.

During the summer she spent most of her afternoons at the tennis club, where she met all her friends, and in August her baby was born.

It was a boy, and Amy was very proud of him, for he was a fine healthy child, very different to the fragile delicate little Gladys, for whom she seemed to have no affection.

One afternoon, when the baby was about two months old, Amy was alone, and by some mistake Mr. Stanley Hyde was shown in, to her great annoyance, for she had a great antipathy to him.

He was a big man, with bold bad eyes, dyed hair and moustache, and an odious leer, which he thought very effective and which was very repellent; he was over-dressed, and had an insolent manner, which made him very unpopular, though his money and his position gave him the *entrée* to the best society in Jersey.

"Now, Mrs. Lockwood, I want you to come for a drive with me; it will do you no end of good," he said, sitting much closer to Amy than she liked.

"Thank you; I drive every day."

"But not with me. You must come with me. I won't take a refusal."

"Thank you; you are very kind, but I don't think Mr. Lockwood will let me," said Amy.

"Nonsense! he is a tyrant, I know, but he can't be so bad as that; besides he is not at home. Come now, there is time."

"No, thank you," said Amy, who was expecting Jack to come in every moment.

"There he is," she thought, as the door bell rung, but to her annoyance the servant came in, and asked if Mr. Janvrin could speak to her for a minute.

Amy knew the man had come for his quarterly cheque, which owing to her illness she had omitted to pay ; she feared he would want more than ten pounds this quarter, for her bill was now very heavy ; but what annoyed her most was that he should have clashed with Mr. Stanley Hyde, who was a great gossip, and would guess she owed the Janvrins money.

She must see him, for Jack would be in immediately, and she must prevent them from meeting at all hazards, so asking Mr. Hyde to excuse her, she went out.

As she feared, Mr. Janvrin was not satisfied with ten pounds this quarter, and very civilly hinted he must appeal to Mr. Lockwood unless he could have more. At her wits' ends to know what to do, Amy promised him another ten pounds at the end of the week, and succeeded in getting rid of him before Jack came in.

"Ah ! that fellow Janvrin is worrying you, is he ? Can I be of any use ? I'll give you a blank cheque with pleasure. You can pay me when you like, you know," said Mr. Stanley Hyde, on her return.

"No, thank you. I don't want any money ; if I did my husband is the only person I should apply to," said Amy coldly.

"Ye—es ! Janvrin and I are old acquaintances. I know who owes him money almost as well as he knows himself ; but I am very discreet ; I never tell the husbands of his creditors."

"How honourable !" said Amy, with the suspicion of a sneer not lost on her visitor.

"There are conceivable circumstances under which I might break through my rule," said Mr. Hyde, in a very meaning tone.

"Indeed ! May I ask what they may be ?" said Amy, still speaking sarcastically.

"Persistent refusal to comply with my requests. Mrs. Lockwood, I am giving a picnic next month ; you must come to it," said Mr. Hyde.

And Amy knew by his manner and tone, as he intended she should, that if she refused he would let Jack know of her difficulties in some way or other.

Probably he would send him an anonymous letter, for anonymous letters are rather a feature in the manners and customs of a certain set of Jersey people, and Mr. Hyde was quite capable of writing one.

She must go to this picnic then, and she must devise some way of avoiding the drive, which she inwardly resolved no power on earth should induce her to take with Mr. Hyde.

The picnic Mr. Hyde spoke of was a kind of entertainment very popular in Jersey; the order of which is to drive out to one of the bays, and after scrambling about the rocks for an hour or so go to an hotel where a high tea has been ordered, after which dancing goes on till ten or eleven, when the guests drive home by moonlight.

Amy promised to go to this picnic, which was to be at Bouley Bay, but she said nothing about it to Jack until the formal invitation arrived.

"I shall accept this, Jack, and you must come with me," she said, tossing the card to her husband.

Jack looked at it and answered quickly:

"Stanley Hyde! Decline it, Amy. I would not accept his hospitality on any account; besides, those draughty rooms and the long drive at night won't do for you. I can't let you run any risk of another illness."

"Nonsense, Jack. I am quite well now, and I wish to go; in fact I have promised to go. If you won't come with me I must go alone, much as I dislike doing so," said Amy.

"You can't go alone, and no power on earth would persuade me to go; and, as I said before, you are not strong enough yet for a Jersey picnic. Brown told me that for three months you must be very careful of cold," said Jack.

"That is absurd. It will be nearly three months by the day of the picnic, and I shall certainly keep my promise and go," said Amy.

"You will do nothing of the kind. I weakly allowed you to go to that sand-eeling party, which so nearly proved fatal to you, when Gladys was born; now I intend to be firm, and until Dr. Brown assures me there is no risk of cold or over-excitement, I must insist on your refusing all invitations to dances and picnics," said Jack decidedly.

"I have already accepted this invitation, so I must go," said Amy with that air of a spoilt child Jack knew so well.

"You cannot go, Amy. Don't be childish," said Jack impatiently.

"I must, and will go," said Amy.

"No, you will not. I positively forbid it. I will answer the invitation myself," said Jack, rising and leaving the room to put an end to the conversation.

Amy was in a dilemma.

This was the first time Jack had ever asserted his marital authority; she was not sure what course he would take if she disobeyed him secretly; to do so openly would, she knew, be impossible, for he would prevent her.

On the other hand, if she did not go to the party Mr. Stanley Hyde would certainly tell Jack of her debts, and not for the world would she have that happen. It would estrange Jack from her for ever; no hope of her ever winning his love if he found out she was in debt; he would despise her, nay, she believed he would hate her for having tarnished his honour, knowing as she did what a horror he had of owing money.

In her heart of hearts she had no wish to go to this party. She would hate it if Jack were not there; she would a thousand times rather be at home with him. Oh, how she had changed. She who, before that scene in the cave, would have scorned an evening alone with her husband.

But go she must, or Mr. Stanley Hyde would fulfil his threat. She must prevent that at all hazards, even though it involved disobeying her husband, as it certainly would. That was the lesser evil of the two; she must choose that. So she wrote to Mr. Hyde and told him that, although Mr. Lockwood was declining the invitation for both of them, she intended to come to the picnic. Then she tried her powers of persuasion on her doctor, and endeavoured to get him to say she ran no risk in going to the picnic, but here she failed, for the doctor refused to take the responsibility.

Baffled but not defeated, Amy said no more about the picnic, and Jack thought she had forgotten it.

On the day fixed for the picnic Mrs. Lockwood announced at luncheon that she was going out to Saumarez Cottage that afternoon to see her aunts, and should not be back till night, as she intended to stay to dinner.

"You must have a fly, then; you can't drive home in the pony-

carriage. I shall dine at the mess," said Jack, not sorry to have an opportunity of so doing.

No more was said, and at half-past four that afternoon Mrs. Lockwood drove off in a close carriage, but instead of going to Saumarez Cottage, she ordered the coachman to drive her to Bouley Bay.

At six o'clock that evening Jack left his club to go home and dress for mess, and as he passed a bookseller's shop by the club he met Miss Keppel stepping out of the shop into her carriage.

He stopped to help her in, remarking she was out rather late for her.

"Yes ; and we are dining out to-night. Tell Hobbs to drive fast, will you ?"

"Dining out ! Why, Amy has gone to have tea and dinner with you," said Jack in amazement.

"Nonsense, Jack ; she knows we are engaged. You must have made a mistake," said Miss Keppel.

"I suppose I have," said Jack in a very grave tone, for it flashed upon him at that moment that this was the day of Mr. Hyde's picnic.

Was Amy gone to it ?

Had she dared to disobey him ?

Would she condescend to deceive him about so paltry a matter ?

With knitted brows and compressed mouth, Jack Lockwood walked home as fast as his legs could take him.

"Is your mistress at home ?" he asked.

"No, sir. Mrs. Lockwood went out in a close carriage about two hours ago, and left word she would not be home till night. There is no dinner, sir, this evening."

"No, quite right. Mrs. Lockwood is gone to Bouley Bay, I believe ?" said Jack at a venture.

"Yes, sir. I heard her give the order," said the maid, confirming his suspicion.

"I want a close fly as soon as possible," said Jack ; but instead of dressing for mess he only made a slight alteration in his dress, and when the fly came he ordered the man to drive him, not to the Fort, but to Bouley Bay.

CHAPTER XXII.

TWO EVES.

"FELIX, I am a very wicked woman."

"Indeed. When did you discover that ?" replied Felix.

The first speaker was Frances Selsey, with whom Felix was spending the evening in the month of October. Her boy, now a year old, was in bed, and they were waiting dinner for Mr. Selsey, who had just come in from his parish.

"I have often expected it, but what has specially impressed it on my mind now is, I have disobeyed my husband," said Frances.

"You, Frances! I can scarcely believe it possible," said Felix.

"It is about the yacht. I so often regret that Tom has had to give it up, for he misses it so much. At last he told me I was not even to think of it again, and on no account to mention it," and here Frances paused.

"Well," said Felix, looking very big and handsome as he stood on the hearthrug, smiling down at Frances and her confession.

"Well, I have pinched and screwed and saved up enough money to hire it for him for next summer from the man he sold it to, and he is to have it from the end of March to October; and now I am afraid to tell him, and I want you to do it for me. Do you think it was very wrong of me, Felix?"

"Very. Tom will sue for a separation, to a certainty."

"Don't be silly, Felix. I am in earnest. It was disobeying him, and I vowed to obey him when we were married," said Frances, as the door opened and Mr. Selsey came in.

"Here he is. Let us put the case before him. Tom, what would you say if one of those ladies of your flock, who occupy so many of your spare half-hours, told you she had disobeyed her husband?" said Felix to his brother-in-law.

"I should probably tell her her husband was the proper person to receive such a confession, and, by so doing, stop all such confidences from the same quarter. Why?"

"Only because Frances has just confessed to me that she has been disobeying you, and I wished to know how to act."

"I know better. Frances is a pattern wife," said Mr. Selsey, laying one hand on his wife's head and tilting it back to look full into her eyes.

"It is true, Tom, and I do hope you won't be angry with me. It is about your yacht," said Frances.

"Hush! I told you never to mention that to me again."

"I know; but I must just this once. I have hired it for you for all next summer."

"Did you ever hear of such contumacy in your life, Tom? I hope you'll deal summarily with it," put in Felix.

"Frances, you are a very sinful woman to spoil your husband in this way. How did you manage to get the money?" said Mr. Selsey, looking so delighted that Frances was more than repaid for all the small sacrifices she had had to make.

"Oh, a little economy did it. And you are really not angry with me, Tom?" said Frances, as dinner was announced.

During dinner the conversation turned on Green, whose two years' term of probation would expire at the end of the year. He had been sober all this time, but then he had been so shielded from temptation that Mr. Selsey dreaded lest he should relapse when all restraint was removed.

"I should like to be certain of him before Rose comes back to him," he remarked.

"Why not get Lockwood to take him back for three months on trial? It would be a very good test if he resisted the temptation in Jersey, drink is so cheap there," said Felix.

"That's a very good idea, Felix, for Lockwood would look after him, knowing his story. The question is, would he care for the risk? I must write and ask him," said Mr. Selsey. "By the way, Frances, talking of Jersey reminds me that I heard from home this morning, and mother tells me Major Graham is at Oxburgh again. Do you think Joy means to have him after all?"

"Dear Joy, I wish she would. I should so like to see her married, and I feel sure Major Graham would make her happy," said Frances.

"You are wrong there, Frances. There is only one man in the world, besides myself, who would ever make Joy happy; and he, with all due deference to him, was a fool when he allowed my pet aversion to beguile him into marrying her. I often wonder how that marriage, which certainly was not made in heaven, has turned out," said Mr. Selsey.

"So do I. We have quite lost sight of Amy now, and we were like sisters," said Frances.

"I am going over to stay with her for New Year's Day. She wrote and invited me to go now, but I can't get away. I shall go at the end of the year, though, for I don't care to keep up this coldness any longer," said Felix.

He did not add that Amy had also asked him to lend her some money, a request he had granted.

"Are you? Then I'll tell you what, Felix; you may as well effect a reconciliation while you are there, between Rose and Green, if he keeps sober till then," said Mr. Selsey.

"Is Rose in Jersey, then?" asked Frances.

"Oh, the curiosity of woman! No, you inquisitive person; Rose is not in Jersey. Felix, I flatter myself I have kept that secret uncommonly well, seeing I labour under the disadvantage of being a married man."

"You very nearly let the cat out of the bag then, though," said Felix.

"If you knew the life Frances has led me, trying to worm that secret out of me, you'd eschew matrimony. Just ask Lockwood, when you go to Jersey, if he has ever dared to have a secret from his wife. I'll engage to say he never has," said Mr. Selsey.

"Amy is much more likely to have secrets from him," said Frances.

This conversation took place on the evening of Mr. Stanley Hyde's picnic at Bouley Bay, and could Mr. Selsey only have known what was happening in that romantic spot that evening, his opinion of Amy would not have risen any higher.

Mrs. Lockwood was not enjoying herself. In the first place, there were one or two people there who were not in her set, and whom she considered bad style; in the second, Mr. Stanley Hyde, of whom she was secretly afraid, was so pressing in his attentions as to be positively offensive, to say nothing of the food for scandal he was offering his other guests; and, in the third, she was dreading the consequences if by any chance her husband should find out where she was.

The tea, which was practically a cold dinner, with champagne instead of tea to drink, was finished shortly before eight o'clock, when the room was cleared for dancing. While this was being done, the guests strolled about the cliffs and looked at the moonlight on the sea beneath them, laughing, talking and flirting the while. Amy, Mr. Stanley Hyde and two officers, whom she was exerting herself to fascinate in order to keep them with her and so avoid a *tête-à-tête* with Mr. Hyde, these four were standing close to the hotel, when a carriage drove up.

"Another arrival—who can it be, Hyde?" said one officer.

"Whoever it is, is come the day after the fair," said the other officer.

"I can't imagine who it can be. Every one has arrived," said Mr. Hyde.

"Why, it is Lockwood! It is your husband, Mrs. Lockwood," said the first officer, as Jack got out of the carriage.

Amy turned hot and cold, and most devoutly wished the earth would open and swallow her up.

What would he do?

Would he quarrel with Mr. Hyde?

Would he reprove her before the rest of the party?

He looked very implacable as he advanced to the little group of which she formed the centre. He was very handsome, Amy thought with pride; but how grave and stern he was for so young a man—and oh! how her heart beat as he approached.

"Good evening, Hyde. I have come to fetch Mrs. Lockwood. She is not out of the doctor's hands yet, and is ordered to be indoors by sunset, but I could not get here sooner. Amy, have you any more wraps?" said Jack.

"You don't mean to say you are going to take Mrs. Lockwood away at once? Why, her card is full; I can't hear of such a thing," said Mr. Hyde.

The two officers also raised their protest, and some other friends coming up united their entreaties to Mr. Lockwood to allow his wife to stay later, but Jack was firm, and resisted all their prayers courteously but decidedly.

The men were furious; the ladies secretly rejoiced, as Amy, too much frightened to offer more than a feeble protest, was driven away by her angry lord and master.

Not a word was spoken during the drive home. Jack was too angry to trust himself to speak; Amy felt like a naughty child, and was too much mortified to care for conversation; but though mortified, on the whole she congratulated herself on having got well out of her difficulty.

Jack was angry, it was true; but he did not know of her debts, that was a comfort, and Mr. Stanley Hyde was flattered by her going to his party and so was not likely to betray her; and it had all been arranged without a quarrel between Jack and Mr. Hyde. On the whole, Amy thought she had little to repent of, especially as Jack had so acted that every one would

suppose it was only anxiety for her health which had led him to come for her. Mr. Hyde was the only person likely to suspect any other motive, and he would keep his own counsel on this point.

"Amy, the next time you disobey me, I shall be obliged if you will do so openly ; I hate deceit," said Jack, when they got home, and that was the only remark he made on the subject ; but it cut Amy deeper than if he had taken a whip and lashed her.

He scarcely spoke to his wife for the next week, except at meals or when any one was present who would observe his silence, but Amy, though conscious she had been wrong, while she deprecated his anger, and wondered if they were to spend the remainder of their lives in this silence, was too proud to make any advances.

CHAPTER XXIII.

MISS DORCAS'S DILEMMA.

ONE morning in November, Miss Keppel was writing letters in the library ; Miss Lydia was absorbed in a novel in the drawing-room, and Miss Dorcas was engaged in potting plants in the greenhouse which opened into the drawing-room ; her occupation being interrupted constantly by a chase after a puppy, a new possession, and one which did not tend to preserve the peace of the house, for it was always in mischief. Presently Miss Lydia looked up from her novel, and glancing out of the window, said :

"Why, Dorcas, here is the postman with the Weymouth letters. How very odd ; the Southampton boat is only now coming in."

"Perhaps there is one for me, the Cape mail is due to-day," said Miss Dorcas, leaving the puppy in the conservatory, and a large fern she had just unpotted on the floor by the side of it, while she went to meet the postman.

There was a letter for her, and seeing it was the one she expected from Mr. Dobson, she went into the dining-room to read it, leaving Miss Lydia to her novel and the puppy to its own devices.

Pulling off her gardening gloves, she broke the seal and read as follows :

"Dearest Dorcas—"

"Cape Town, October 10th.

"Is he mad?" thought Miss Dorcas, for his letters always began in a much more decorous fashion.

"Your dear letter has made me the happiest man on this side of the grave."

"My dear letter! Bless the man, I owe him a letter. I have not written to him for weeks," she muttered.

"The moment it arrived I made arrangements to start for Jersey, to fetch my bride."

"Poor fellow! He must have had sunstroke; he is evidently quite daft," said Miss Dorcas.

"And in all probability I shall reach Saumarez Cottage as soon as this letter, for I leave by the same ship."

"Heavens! What does he mean? Surely the doctors won't let him come," thought Miss Dorcas.

"It had pleased the Lord to deal sorely with his minister, and I was feeling very downcast and lonely when your letter, which has changed the whole current of my life, reached me."

"What on earth is he thinking of?"

"Dorcas, knowing me as you do, you will not, I know, be surprised to hear that the first thing I did, after reading it, was to kneel down and praise the Lord, who has done such wonderful things for me."

"I am surprised. I am amazed," said Miss Dorcas.

"That it should at last have pleased Him to grant my prayer, after all these weary years of waiting, and when I had, I hope, submissively bowed my head to my lonely lot; then, to give me my Dorcas as the companion of my heart and home, was joy unspeakable, and I praised Him with a heart filled with gratitude."

"What can he mean? He is as mad as a hatter," muttered the recipient of this letter.

"Dorcas, when I think my lonely days and nights are over, my heart feels as light as a boy's. I forget my fifty years. I remember nothing but 'Dorcas is coming.'"

"And the sooner you forget such stuff the better," said Miss Dorcas.

"I look round my modest home and think soon Dorcas will be there, and I count the hours till I start to fetch her whom my soul loveth. The mail is leaving; I must end, for I, too, leave with it.

"Your loving JOSIAH DOBSON."

Miss Dorcas sunk on to the nearest chair when she had finished reading this extraordinary epistle, and then, with it lying in her lap, tried, but tried in vain, to fathom its meaning ; the more she pondered over it, the more mysterious did it seem.

She examined the handwriting, but it was firm and clear as ever ; it showed no sign of mental aberration.

She read the letter again, and this time she grasped the fact that if he were on his way to Jersey, it was quite possible he might arrive that very day by the Southampton boat. While she was thus occupied, Miss Lydia was so much interested in a love-scene she was reading, in which the hero was to her mind the fac-simile of one of her own lovers, and the heroine a second edition of herself, though in reality a most striking contrast to what Miss Lydia ever was, so much interested was she that she did not notice the puppy.

This delightful creature, with a canine desire to be helpful to his absent mistress, had seized the fern Miss Dorcas had been potting, by the fronds, and was now successfully engaged in breaking the ball of mould round its roots by dragging it about the drawing-room carpet, to the great detriment of the latter.

Miss Lydia went on with her love-scene ; her prototype's lips had met the hero's in one long kiss in the most approved fashion ; the puppy had just shaken the last piece of mould off the fern root when the door opened, and what a sight met Miss Keppel's eyes !

Her drawing-room, which had been swept that morning, was a mass of mould and fern leaves, which were scattered all over it in all directions till there was some excuse for her remark that it looked more like a ploughed field than a lady's drawing-room.

"Good gracious me, Lydia ! Look here ! Just see what that wretched puppy has been doing. Dorcas ! Where is Dorcas ? Come here ! Ring the bell, Lydia, at once for Mary. Dear me, dear me ! you two girls and the puppy will drive me crazy," exclaimed Miss Keppel.

Miss Dorcas, hearing her sister call, slipped the letter which had so disturbed her equanimity into her pocket, and rushed to the rescue.

Miss Lydia, novel in hand, was walking about on tip-toe, shaking her skirts and gazing with unmitigated horror at the room so recently swept and garnished, into which a spirit seven times worse than the ordinary evil spirit who scatters dust in unseemly places had entered so unceremoniously.

"Really, Dorcas, that puppy is incorrigible," she remarked.

"The puppy! I don't blame the puppy; why on earth did you sit here and allow it to do it?" said Miss Dorcas.

"I was reading and didn't notice the dog, Dorcas," remonstrated Miss Lydia.

"Notice, indeed! it is all your fault and mine, not the dog's," said Miss Dorcas.

"I don't care whose fault it is, Dorcas; I insist upon the dog being well whipped," said Miss Keppel, who was clearly of opinion that vicarious punishment was better than no punishment at all.

"Well, I can whip the puppy, but it is Lydia's fault," said Miss Dorcas, who it appeared would have infinitely preferred to whip Miss Lydia; but she took up a dog-whip and went after the puppy, who, conscience-stricken, was hiding from the inevitable sequel to its performance.

Miss Dorcas subsequently found it a quarter of an hour later under a seat in the garden, and faking it back to the scene of its transgression held it by the skin of its neck and proceeded to whip it, taking care to hurt it as little as possible, scolding it loudly the while.

"There, you wicked, wicked dog; see what your Aunt Lydia allowed you to do, while she was reading a trashy novel. Who is the more to blame, I should like to know?"

"Dorcas!" said a well-known voice, and dropping the puppy, Miss Dorcas turned round and saw Mr. Dobson, who had entered the room unannounced, considering the object of his mission too romantic to admit of the conventionality of being announced.

"Mr. Dobson," said Miss Dorcas, nervously scanning her visitor to see if he showed any signs of insanity.

"Say Josiah, Dorcas, under the circumstances," said Mr. Dobson, taking Miss Dorcas's hands into his fat soft ones.

"What circumstances?" inquired Miss Dorcas, without a vestige of lurking romance in her tone.

"Those happy circumstances under which I have come so far, Dorcas," continued the elderly lover.

"I don't know what they are. Are you alluding to the fine passage you must have had?"

"Is she coy, my Dorcas? I am alluding to your letter, your dear, dear letter, my love," said Mr. Dobson, squeezing Miss Dorcas's hands as he gently lifted them up and down.

"My letter! What letter? I have not written to you for weeks; I have just had one from you that I can't make head or tail of," said Miss Dorcas abruptly, drawing her hands away.

"The coy creature! This letter, my beloved," said Mr. Dobson, pulling a letter from his breast-pocket and holding it up.

Miss Dorcas glanced at the envelope; it was her handwriting! She grasped the letter.

"Let me see it."

"It is your own writing, you see," said Mr. Dobson playfully, as he gave her the letter.

"Yes, I see it is; but for all that I never wrote it, I know by the date," said Miss Dorcas, glancing at the letter.

"Read it, Dorcas, read it; you will remember then," said Mr. Dobson, a possible fear that perhaps after all Miss Dorcas had not written it entering his head.

Miss Dorcas sat down, opened the letter and read as follows:

"Saumarez Cottage,
"October.

"MY DEAR JOSIAH—"

Josiah, indeed! Such horrible familiarity, unmaidenly as it was, gave Miss Dorcas a shock, and would at once have sufficed, had she needed any proofs, to convince her the letter was none of hers. She gasped for breath and continued reading:

"I miss you very much, so much that at the risk of your thinking me unmaidenly, I write these lines to say, if you will come back—but oh! how shall I ever say the rest? If you will come back, you, you, you shall not return to Africa *alone*.

"Your own, if you will have it so,
"DORCAS."

That was all.

The letter was short, but then it was also sweet, much too sweet to please Miss Dorcas.

For a few moments she was speechless, utterly dumfounded at the dilemma in which she found herself.

The handwriting was so exact an imitation of her writing, that but for the matter of the letter, which by no possibility could she have composed, she could not have sworn the writing was not hers; every little trick of penmanship was successfully copied.

As far as the handwriting was concerned she could not blame

Mr. Dobson for thinking it hers ; but that he, knowing her so well, should think her capable of such boldness was to her inexplicable, except on the ground that the wish was father to the thought.

They were a very strange-looking pair of lovers, could any one have seen them just then ; she, with her short grizzly grey hair, always rough and curly, rougher and curlier than usual ; her small bright eyes sparkling with excitement, her cheeks flushed as she sat bolt upright on a high chair, her hands folded over the mysterious letter ; he standing opposite to her, rubbing his soft white hands in perplexity, his bald head bent towards her with a look of such pathetic earnestness on his plain face, framed in ugly bushy whiskers, as almost to redeem it from its ugliness.

Miss Dorcas was the first to speak, and with her usual bluntness, she looked up at him and said in her abrupt tone :

“ Did you seriously think I wrote that letter ? ”

The plain, homely face, fringed with pepper and salt whiskers, grew very pale ; beads of perspiration stood on the smooth forehead, the lips quivered, the ordinary blue-grey eyes shone with a strange light, as Mr. Dobson answered in a low, unnatural voice :

“ For God’s sake, Dorcas, don’t say you didn’t.”

It was, perhaps, the first and only time in his life Mr. Dobson was ever guilty of such an expression ; it was a strong one from any man, from him it showed he was stirred to the very depths of his nature ; he was quite unconscious of his profanity, as in calmer moments he would have called his language.

He wanted to express that it was of infinite consequence to him whether Miss Dorcas wrote that letter or not, and he used the first words which came into his mind to express that fact. Miss Dorcas was genuinely frightened ; she had known for the last quarter of a century that he loved her ; she had not known till that moment how deeply.

Her answer was clearly a matter of life and death to him now ; he had been so buoyed up with hope for the last three weeks, that to be suddenly plunged into despair at the very moment he believed his happiness to be within his grasp, was more than he could bear, as the ashen-grey look on his face and that strange light in his eyes bore witness.

She did not answer ; she could not say she wrote the letter ; she dared not say she didn’t.

"Dorcas, speak ; say you wrote it."

Still Miss Dorcas hesitated.

She could not quench the last spark of hope in her friend's breast ; she could not strike the blow from which something told her he would never recover, neither could she make up her mind to marry him ; to sacrifice her independence, her tastes, her will ; to give up a life which suited and satisfied her, for a life which she did not think would suit her at all.

In spite of her abrupt manner she was a very sensitive woman, and she had a keen sense of humour, and she shrank from the satire her marriage would call forth among all her acquaintances.

She was strongly of opinion that no woman should marry after she was forty ; she was no advocate of marriage at any age ; at her own she thought it worse than folly ; could she bring herself to be the laughing-stock of the island ?

On the other hand, she had often been heard to say there was only one thing worse than marrying a man which a woman could do, and that was to jilt him, and to bring a man all the way from Africa to marry her, and then refuse to marry him, was a very bad form of jilting.

True, she had not actually done so, but her good or evil genius had done it for her, and the consequences to Mr. Dobson would be the same as if she herself had written the letter which brought him to England.

All this passed rapidly through her mind, far quicker than it takes to tell, till at last another appeal from Mr. Dobson clinched her decision.

"Dorcas, speak ; this suspense is killing me."

And then Miss Dorcas rose, and dropping the letter to the ground, put both her hands into Mr. Dobson's and said :

"I will go back with you."

And when she did so, she made as true a sacrifice as woman ever made, though no one would give her credit for it, as she knew well enough ; she also knew the greatest sacrifices are those of which the world is ignorant.

(To be continued)

LONDON SOCIETY.

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A Third Person.

By B. M. CROKER,

Author of "PROPER PRIDE," "DIANA BARRINGTON," "TWO MASTERS,"
"INTERFERENCE," "A FAMILY LIKENESS," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXI.

QUITE A BRIDAL BOUQUET.

AND how had Captain Hope spent the evening? Not as satisfactorily as he had expected, as may be readily imagined. His cousin Clara was another individual to whom the great ball of the season had proved an unqualified disappointment.

Mrs. Skyler had taken time by the forelock, and had arrayed herself in full evening costume before dinner, believing that by this arrangement, she would ensure a *tête-à-tête* with Roger, whilst her mother and Annie were making their toilettes.

Annie had inspected her sister's premature magnificence, with immensely elevated eyebrows, and had listened to her plausible excuses "that Wickes could not possibly attire three people at the same time, and therefore she had sacrificed her own inclinations and dressed thus early, so as to be out of the way."

For Clara to inconvenience herself to get out of any one's way was an event that had at least the merit of novelty, and Annie appended a mental rider to the effect: "She wants us out of the way, that is the real truth," and Annie's surmises were correct.

As Clara sat alone by the drawing-room fire, slowly sipping her coffee, her reflections were not altogether disagreeable, judging by the expression of her eyes—which were intently fixed upon the blazing coals—she was thinking:

"I am looking my very best to-night—no one would take me for more than six-and-twenty. Roger has promised to write to me; he has made no attempt to meet that girl next door. He

has not spoken to her this time—except the day I escorted him in there—he has forgotten her. Just like a man! And he is certainly contemplating matrimony, for I heard him pumping mother about going out to India to be married, and about outfits and housekeeping. Yes, if I play my cards well, good-bye to England, damp and debt! I shall turn over a new leaf and begin a fresh chapter in my life.”

She rose suddenly, put down her cup, threw off her opera mantle, and walked over to a long mirror in which she surveyed herself dispassionately. “Yes, not more than six-and-twenty,” she murmured; “and *Cérise* has surpassed herself this time,” slowly revolving for her own inspection. “She will charge me something frightful, but, after all, a good cut is everything; and perhaps”—with a smile at herself—“it will come in for the trousseau.” Undoubtedly, Mrs. Skyler was looking well, and was wearing a superb gown, a yellow brocade, which fitted her admirably; and from the diamonds twinkling in her hair, to her yellow satin shoes, her toilette was perfection.

“What can be keeping him?” she continued impatiently. “Of course he is packing—here he comes at last!” and she had just time to reseal herself as Roger entered.

“Well!” she exclaimed, “you have been putting up your traps, I suppose. I dressed early so as to have you all to myself, even for a little time, this *last* evening. We can have a nice comfortable talk whilst mother is adorning, and Annie, poor dear, is disfiguring herself! *Her* idea of an evening toilette is a high black grenadine, with a velvet rosette in her hair. She always looks her worst in a ball-room,” continued her amiable sister complacently.

“Ah,” said Roger, who was fond of Annie, “we cannot all be handsome, and her attractions are not exactly on the surface.”

“No. She is safe from any perils which beset the fatal gift of beauty,” rejoined Clara with a sneer. “And,” rising and spreading out her hands to the fire, and looking at her cousin with her head over her shoulder, she said, with her most coquettish air, “pray what do you say to my gown, Roger? What do you think of *me*?”

“I’m not much of a judge,” he answered awkwardly; “but you look ripping.”

“,” See she continued, producing a programme, which she

dangled playfully before him, "see what a pretty thing I have got. I always secure one on the sly; it prevents one being worried by bores. Now, how many shall I put you down for? Shall we say three?" taking her pencil, "two, and five, and eleven?"

"Yes, with pleasure," responded her companion, and never had he uttered a more stupendous falsehood.

"I wonder if those people are really going from next door?" she continued; "the old tiger and his ewe lamb."

"You mean the general and Miss Yaldwin?" said Roger in his most matter-of-fact style.

"*Don't* be so silly. Of course I do. It's a pity no good Samaritan will rescue that wretched girl, and take her out to dances. But people don't want stupid young women. Most of them have half a dozen of their own, and cannot be bothered."

"No; I suppose not. Who was it that said, there would be plenty of good Samaritans were it not for the two pence and the oil? However, the general is going to escort his granddaughter to this dance himself."

"Yes; I heard something of it from Annie," said Clara indifferently; "and I shall only believe in it when I see it."

"Oh, here are the flowers at last," remarked Roger, as a parlour-maid now entered with a large box; "and just in the nick of time."

"Bouquets! How too sweet of you," cried Clara, clasping her hands affectedly. "I am so fond of a large bouquet. I can walk into a room behind one with any amount of confidence, and besides it is such a capital screen."

Meanwhile her cousin had been busily occupied in unpacking the flowers, and now exhibited three choice bouquets, fresh from a London florist.

"First come first served," he said. "Take your choice, Clara, though I don't think that there is a pin to choose between them."

"Oh, they are positively too tempting," sniffing them in turn. After a long and exhaustive inspection she said: "With a million thanks, I'll have the camellias and violets; but"—starting as if she had seen a snake—"there is still another in the box, Roger. Did you know? They must have sent it by mistake," and, diving her hand for it, she triumphantly produced

number four. "What a dream! All pure white! How too exquisite!" she exclaimed rapturously. Mentally she was saying, "If this is for that girl, it will be worse for her."

"It's all right," rejoined Roger, with tranquil self-possession; "that one is for Miss Yaldwin."

"Miss Yaldwin," repeated Clara, with slow distinct utterance, as if she had never heard the name before; and there was a moment's expressive silence. "Is *this* a new form of attention to the general?" she asked sarcastically, now throwing down her own bouquet, and taking up the other in its place.

"No."

"And," twisting it round and round in her shaking hands, "*quite* bridal, I declare. Do coming events cast their shadows before?" and she looked across the flowers, with an interrogative squint!

"What was the matter with Clara?" her cousin asked himself nervously. She was often a little odd in her manner; to-day she had been specially restless and eccentric, and now there was a hard ring in her voice that made him feel excessively uncomfortable. Oh, for an interruption! Instead of saying, "Night, or Blücher," he inwardly ejaculated, "My aunt, or the fly."

Mrs. Skyler walked to the door with a determined air, opened it, looked out, and then sailed back to the fireplace, and with a wave of the white bouquet, summoned her cousin to approach. "You have a liking—a *sneaking* liking—for Rose Yaldwin," she began abruptly. "You think she is a cross between a martyr and an angel. Dear me, how she has thrown dust in your eyes, and made an utter fool of you. She is an odious creature. I could tell you pretty stories about her if I liked, but I won't!" she concluded, in a fierce concentrated voice.

"Thank you," replied Roger, stiffly; "I will take the will for the deed."

"Oh, Roger!" she burst out, "how can you look at me so—so unkindly—and speak to me in such a tone when this may be the last time we may ever meet—yes, the very last time?" And Mrs. Skyler sank into a chair in a becoming attitude, covered her face with her hands, and allowed the delicate white bouquet to tumble into the fender.

Roger picked it up carefully, and said, "I have no wish to quarrel with you, Clara. You may be sure, that I have no desire

to carry away from here, where I have spent such happy days, anything but pleasant memories—pleasant memories of every one—and here comes my aunt.”

As Mrs. Baggot rustled slowly into the room with an air of conscious self-approval, she was followed by Annie in a smart low gown, with her hair dressed in the newest fashion, and who, at the first glance, had struck Roger as a somewhat ill-favoured stranger. Mrs. Skyler recovered her self-possession in a surprising manner, and at once fell into raptures over her mother's appearance. The bouquets were duly admired and appropriated, and Roger's thoughtfulness in including Rose in his floral offerings, was warmly commended, especially by Mrs. Baggot.

“Don't send it in next door, Roger,” was her advice; “it would shock Leach! He would think it might be followed up by a train of bridesmaids, or take it down to the kitchen to talk it over with the cook, and ask if it was to be delivered or given to the greengrocer? I'll put it in a basket, and we will carry it to the ball, and keep it for Rose in the ladies' room, and give it to her when she arrives. I hear their cab driving off now.”

This was perfectly true, but the good lady little suspected, that the cab was empty.

CHAPTER XXII.

“SHE COMETH NOT, HE SAID.”

HAVING carefully packed his relations, with their three bouquets, into the fly, and ascended the box himself, Roger drove off to this much anticipated ball.

“Were they late?” he wondered anxiously, as they at last drew up in their turn under the great new porch of the Town Hall.

The band was playing briskly, and through an opening he caught glimpses of gyrating figures.

“Oh, it's all right,” said Clara reassuringly; “it's only an extra just to try the floor, it's not on the programme, so you may have it. I shall not be a second taking off my cloak; wait outside the door of the ladies' room and I will join you.”

There was no getting out of this arrangement, and Roger accepted his fate with an air of calm resignation.

After the extra he walked about with his cousin on his arm, in order, as she said, to look at the decorations and the people; but Roger's attention was entirely devoted to the latter. He was eagerly scrutinizing every group in hopes of catching sight of the general's hooked nose and military figure, not to speak of the general's fair companion; but, alas! his quick soldier eye roved over the crowd of well-dressed men and women—young and old, handsome and ugly, for the pair he sought, in vain.

Meanwhile Clara remained steadfastly beside him, nodding and smiling to acquaintances, and keeping her hand on his coat sleeve with an air of gracious appropriation; the first dance struck up, he edged nearer and nearer to the entrance.

"You are waiting for the general, I can see," said Mrs. Skyler; "I wonder you don't go and stand at the door and receive Miss Yaldwin bouquet in hand. By the way, what have you done with it?"

"I have left it in a safe place," he replied rather shortly. He wished he had been able to do the same with his companion.

"Well, the dance is half over, and you *see* she has not come. It's a sin to waste it, so do take half a turn with me."

This half-turn comprised the remainder of the waltz, and as Mrs. Skyler was a first-rate partner, a celebrated waltzer, in one respect no doubt Roger gained, as Rose Yaldwin was quite an inexperienced performer. Precisely as Rose watched the clock, so did Captain Hope keep his eyes continually fixed on the door. He watched every cab that drove up disgorge its freight, but there was no sign of General Yaldwin and his granddaughter, and he was now a prey to all the feverish miseries of suspense.

Clara kept him in close attendance, and bantered him spitefully on his anxiety and absent-mindedness. He had danced three dances with his cousin and taken her in to refreshments, and yet "She cometh not, he said" might have been the burden of his song, had he been disposed to sing—which was far from being the case. He found it impossible to shake off Clara, who was not in unreasonable demand, and who, nevertheless, was in the highest spirits. "What *luck*," she kept mentally ejaculating; 'what a splendid and unexpected piece of luck! The old tiger has turned crusty—bless him!'

Watchful dowagers and partnerless girls, with ample leisure, noticed how constantly Captain Hope danced with his cousin,

Mrs. Skyler, and wondered if there was anything in it. Five dances out of ten was a liberal allowance for the widow to bestow on her cousin. There was no one to tell these observing beholders, that Clara had asked for every one of them herself, and, a short time afterwards, when he had detached himself, she sought him out and whispered eagerly:

"Oh, Roger, my next partner is *such* a horror! do rescue me; I'll throw him over and dance with you instead."

"The old man of the sea was not in it with Clara," he mentally remarked. "But he was engaged," he pleaded; "and horror or no horror, never threw over his partners: that was a woman's privilege," and Clara withdrew with ill-concealed disgust.

By half-past twelve, Roger was in the lowest possible spirits, for he had given up all hope of seeing Rose Yaldwin again. He looked as grave as a judge, his aunt remarked, when he took her into supper. For her part, she was in buoyant spirits, brilliantly dressed in black and gold, with diamonds glittering in her hair and in her ears, and was enjoying herself extremely. She had met some old Indian friends: she had just been told a most amusing story, and she was hungry. It did not need a shrewd woman like her to be told the reason of her nephew's gloomy expression.

"Where was the general to-night, I wonder?" she asked; "I am surprised he is not here—he is always a man of his word, and punctual to a minute."

"And I conclude to-night is the exception that proves the rule," filling his aunt's glass.

"I imagine the old lady is ill—something of that kind. She won't live long, I'm afraid. Well, Roger, I need not tell you that I am very sorry you are leaving us, and I think you are a little sorry too."

"I never was so sorry for anything in my life," was the surprisingly complimentary reply.

"However, you will be back among us again before very long: your regiment has only another year or so in India. Perhaps by next Christmas we shall see you again." Raising her glass she looked at him and said "Your very good health," and there was a meaning glance in her eye, as she added, "Roger, I wish you—*success*."

"Thank you, Aunt Polly; I've had rather a run of bad luck lately—and to-night the worst of all."

"Have you? I'm sure I never would have guessed it! You've been dancing away, too, the whole evening; but perhaps your idea is:

'Quand on n'a pas ce qu'on aime,
Il faut aimer ce qu'on a.'

Eh, Roger?"

"No; that's not my style," he protested. "By the way," suddenly jumping up, "this is Annie's dance."

"Very well; never mind me, my dear. Old General Pomeroy will take care of me; and poor dear Annie does not have too many partners. We will go home as soon as it is over."

Annie was in her usual post, sitting among the wallflowers, when her cousin came up and claimed her.

After a few turns he said, "Shall we get away from the crowd and go and sit out a bit?"

Annie would have preferred to finish the dance, being quite fresh and unfatigued, and fond of waltzing, but of course she acceded, and arm-in-arm they sought a retired and dimly-lit little ante-room, which proved to be quite empty, and there seated themselves on a luxurious sort of divan.

"I wonder why the general did not turn up to-night, and, Miss Yaldwin," began Roger at once.

"I cannot imagine. It will be an awful disappointment to poor Rose, she was so eager about coming. I saw her dress this afternoon—it was lovely—and everything laid out ready, even to her hairpins."

"I am awfully disappointed, too; ten times more than she can be. I am sure you have guessed how it is with me, Annie; and I can speak to you somehow, when I could not speak to Clara."

"No; I don't fancy you would get much sympathy from Clara," said Annie, with a short laugh. "I know you like Rose."

"Like!" he echoed impatiently; "I was going to ask her to be my wife to-night."

"Really, Roger!" exclaimed Annie, now sitting bolt upright and gazing at him with a startled expression.

"Yes; I was certain I would see her, and I'm off now in two hours for India, and goodness knows when I shall come back."

"You can write," suggested the ever practical lady.

"Yes ; but I would fifty times rather speak," he said, suddenly standing up. "Writing is so unsatisfactory. You will have to help me, Annie—*will* you?" he urged.

Annie rose to her feet also and stood face to face with her companion, who was quite a different person, to her cousin Roger of every day.

"I never have had any fair play, as you know yourself," he continued ; "something has set the general against me. It's been awfully hard lines, but you can't force yourself into a man's house. Will you go in and see her to-morrow, Annie, like a good girl, and give her the bouquet with your very *own* hands, and a message from *me*?"

Annie hesitated.

"Do, dear, dear Annie," he pleaded. "You know what bad luck it has been—how I've never had a single chance of speaking to her—and here I am going to India without an opportunity of saying one word."

It was extremely pleasant to plain, middle-aged Miss Baggot to find herself acting as a sort of proxy for a pretty girl, to have her handsome cousin Roger looking straight into her eyes, with impassioned glances, and holding her hand tightly in his, whilst he pleaded with her eagerly in a broken and agitated voice. Yes, it was the nearest approach to a love scene in which she had ever taken a part. The sensation was by no means displeasing!

As to passers-by who gazed into the room, the dance being over, any one of them was ready to swear that it was *not* to Mrs. Skyler, but his cousin Annie, that Captain Hope was devoted ; they were undoubtedly engaged—yes, he had proposed for her that evening. As for his being in love with Rose Yaldwin, or ever having given her a thought, it was all the most absurd nonsense.

"You will take her a message from me, and a note?"

"I don't know about the note," said Annie doubtfully ; "you had better send it by post."

"At any rate you will tell her, that I was bitterly disappointed ; that, as far as I was concerned, it was the most wretched evening I ever spent. Tell her that I shall be home before long. I'll exchange, and, Annie," catching her by her skinny arm, "ask her—you can put it in better words than I can—not to forget me quite. Tell her——"

"The fly is waiting," said a well-known treble. "Roger and Annie," continued Mrs. Skyler, sweeping in through the door, and speaking in a somewhat tart voice, "mother and I have been hunting for you everywhere. What *have* you been doing with yourselves?"

"We have been dancing," said Roger mendaciously. "But I see it is later than I thought, and time for me to be on the move."

* * * * *

When Rose removed her finery, it was nearly two o'clock, so she would not go to bed. Had she not had, as the general remarked, her first sleep! She dressed herself in her morning gown, and, turning out the gas, opened the shutters and a little bit of the window, and then, with a shawl wrapped round her, took up her post that bitter winter morning.

"At any rate," she said to herself, "she would have the poor satisfaction of seeing the very last of him." Collins, the ever punctual, drove up about half-past two. He rang next door, and then Rose heard steps and voices—his voice—and by the flash of a lantern, saw Captain Hope, encased in a long ulster coat—saw him for the second—he turned and waved his hand to some one at No. 15. Then the gate clanged, the fly door banged, and he was rolled away into the darkness. Rose sat meditating until the dawn began to break; after this, she threw herself on her bed and slept. When she awoke the room was bright with daylight, and Carter was standing beside her with a sympathetic simper on her face, tendering her a bouquet of the most lovely white flowers, tied with long white satin streamers.

"Miss Baggot sent it, ma'am," she explained, "with this note."

Rose at first imagined that she was still dreaming, then she sprang up, rubbed her eyes, and tore the note open. It said:

"DEAR ROSE,

"What became of you last night? We were *all* so disappointed not to see you at the ball, especially Roger. He had provided bouquets for each of us, and I send in yours, by his desire. He started at half-past two o'clock. I have neuralgia in my face, or I would have taken your flowers in myself. Perhaps you can come in and see *me*.—Yours,
A. B."

The bouquet was exquisite, and according to Carter's estimate must have cost pounds—it was like a bridal one!

"It was very kind of Miss Baggot. She must have got it to go with your dress, and paid a heap of money for it."

Rose made no reply as she turned it carefully over and examined the white orchids, tulips, hyacinths, and eucharis lilies. It afforded her some small consolation. She removed the lace and satin streamers, put them away among her few treasures, and placed the bouquet itself in a huge jar of water. When she went downstairs she discovered that her grandmother was ill, and that the family doctor had been summoned. She was kept in close attendance in the sick room all day, and there was no going in to No. 15. Once or twice she managed to fly upstairs just to look at her bouquet—all that was left of a delightful dream, of shattered hopes, was a bunch of dying white flowers.

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Towards evening Mrs. Skyler, who had only recently risen, came in ostensibly to inquire for Mrs. Yaldwin, but in reality to cross-examine Rose, and give her a *coup de griffe*.

"So your grandfather went to sleep," she said in her pleasantest manner; "and I hear you could not wake him. Poor dear, I *am* so sorry for you, though probably after all you did not miss much."

"No. Did I not?" with ill-assumed nonchalance.

"You see"—now removing her boa, and taking a comfortable chair before the fire and placing her feet on the fender stool—"girls who know *no* one get no partners. If you went out regularly it would be quite another affair, and if men knew that you danced well. As it is, they have their own set of friends, and an outside girl is generally left sitting in a corner all night. It's a miserable experience, I am *told*, though, thank goodness, I know nothing of it myself."

"No; I suppose not," rejoined Rose dreamily. What matter how Mrs. Skyler patronized her now?

"It was a splendid ball. Roger said he did not know when he had enjoyed himself so much. He danced seven or eight times with me. He is a dreadful flirt, is he not?"

"I am sure I don't know," returned Rose gravely.

"Now, my dear little girl," continued Mrs. Skyler, looking at

her companion with her head rather on one side, "you know he flirted with you to a most absurd extent, and I must say that I think it was a *great* shame. It is all very well, to make love to the Strattons and Gascoignes, hardened garrison hacks, but to make a fool of an unsophisticated child like you was really too bad. Roger is a faithless wretch, and his love affairs are legion; but I am really very angry with him on *your* account."

Something seemed to clutch Rose by the throat, and for several seconds she could not articulate. Her face was burning, her hands were trembling, and her heart was beating very fast. To have the sympathy and pity of Mrs. Skyler was unbearable. No, she would not endure it. Why should this odious, scheming woman, this hypocrite, trample on her? At last she found her voice—a voice that vibrated with passion as she said:

"Captain Hope never flirted with me, or made a fool of me, as you so delicately express it. Be as angry as you please with him on your own account, but please leave me and my affairs alone."

"Rose Yaldwin, do you mean to be impertinent?" broke out Mrs. Skyler, and then she paused, for the general had just entered the room; therefore, for the present, hostilities were bound to be postponed. As General Yaldwin accosted the little widow, he mentally remarked: "By Jove, this cast in her eye is getting worse. It is a downright *squint* to-day."

(*To be continued.*)

A Week in Worcestershire.

By J. ERROL.

AS we approached Great Malvern, we looked out of the carriage windows and saw the tall green Beacon Hill with its zigzag winding paths, leading by gentle and gradual slopes to the summit, and we were immediately seized with a strong desire to climb its fern and bracken-covered sides, and standing on its breezy crest study the sublime view. But alas! there was first the obvious necessity of looking for a place wherein to lay our heads, so we turned away from the alluring prospect of a scramble up the Worcestershire Beacon, and proceeded to leave the station, making our way up the gently rising streets to the centre of the town, being struck and charmed as we went by the absence of stiff parallelogramism and the picturesqueness of the villas embowered in luxuriant foliage, and brightened by a variety of lovely flowers, with always a background of the grand hills, standing out cameo-fashion, sharply defined against the clear blue of the sky, with here and there a solitary fir, pine, or oak throwing its delicate tracery against the azure canopy.

We settled down in a charming little white cottage with a flower-wreathed porch, and Gothic gables and quaint twisted chimney-stacks, and a garden that was a veritable rose-bower, so thickly and luxuriantly did the queen of flowers flourish there. The air was heavy with their perfume, and the lesser sweets of clove pinks, mignonette, cherry pie and sweet pea, and we fain would have lingered within its fair and shady precincts, only there was much to be seen, and we had come to Worcestershire sternly resolved to see all we could in seven days, and had no time to waste in idle loitering, however pleasant. So we put on india-rubber shoes, seized our long, steel-pointed sticks, and set out to climb the Worcestershire Beacon.

We had not gone far when we encountered a curious old female, with an antediluvian bonnet adorned with a huge blue "Ugly," that reminded one forcibly of the crinolines of bygone days, who

besought us in moving terms "to take a donkey," an honour which we declined, preferring to trust to our own feet rather than those of her animals, some of them being but sorry brutes. She, however, was not easily daunted, and followed us for some way until we came to another donkey-stand, where a still more extraordinary old creature, with a cotton sun-bonnet, and a particularly shrewish aspect, was occupied in skirmishing with a tribe of small boys, grandsons or great-grandsons we imagined, whose duty it was to drive the donkeys up the hill, but who did everything that they ought not to do according to the old dame, whose attention was arrested, happily for them and for us, by the first donkey-lady, and during the lively encounter that ensued we made our escape, and toiled on to St. Ann's Well, which is about a third of the distance to the top of the Beacon Hill. Here we stopped, and entering the pretty Swiss house refreshed ourselves with a glass of the crystal-clear water, which has a mean temperature of forty-eight degrees, and is pleasant to the taste, though it contains carbonate of lime, magnesia, iron, and soda, sulphate of lime and soda, chloride of sodium and magnesium, oxide of potassium and silicic acid, and has wonderful remedial powers on cases of acidity and dyspepsia.

From this well a path, wide enough to admit of mule-carriages and bath chairs, leads to the summit in a zigzag fashion, revealing fine views at every turn, till the crest is reached, when a truly magnificent view met our eyes. Immediately below lay Malvern, with its capricious and varied yet picturesque houses, Gothic, Corinthian, Swiss, Italian, Elizabethan, Jacobean, Georgian, Oriental, with the cathedral towers of Worcester plainly visible. On the north-east was a hazy line that we knew were the Salopian hills. On the south-east the Cotswold, and the "Queenly Severn" flowing like a stream of flashing silver through valley and greenwood. On the west our eyes ranged the tree-crowned knolls of Herefordshire, the green fertile valleys of Worcester, bounded by the giant mountains of Monmouth and Wales, and on the south we saw the hills of Somersetshire, "The Quantock high lands, and Mendip's sunless caves," and the Herefordshire Beacon rearing its lofty crest heavenwards.

It lay like a map below us, many of the fair verdant counties of England diversified by lakes, thickly-leaved trees, emerald meadows, golden cornfields, dark outlying hedges, tawny hay-

stacks, red-roofed cottages, grey churches with sharp-pointed tapering spires or minarets, palatial mansions that gleamed whitely from amid the embowering foliage, dense and thick as though summer was still in the flush of her meridian, with a background away in the far distance of the English hills and Welsh mountains, on whose tall crests the clouds threw fantastic shadows, and the sun golden and mellow lights. After feasting our eyes for a while we turned and walked along the ridge to the North Hill, getting a fine view of West Malvern as we went, and the rich woods, beautiful undulating hills, and purple-hued apple trees of Herefordshire, and a glimpse of the Wrekin in Shropshire ; then we descended by the way of the Ivy Scar Rock, so called from the ivy that clusters round it, and walking by the Priory church visited Swan Pool, a charming shady piece of water, the abiding place of numerous snowy-plumaged swans, and tiny, fluffy, grey cygnets. Then we came back through a monastic-looking mediæval gateway, beautifully decorated with rich carving, and were amused to see, when we passed under it, on the interior wall, a brass plate, which set forth that a lawyer had his office there. Being so near the priory, of course we went in. This abbey church is a venerable pile of cruciform structure, somewhat resembling Gloucester cathedral, and possesses a veritable Norman minster. Some of the stained glass windows are magnificent, and are considered about the best specimens in England of fifteenth-century glass ; they were given to the abbey by Henry VII., who was very much attached to Malvern, and often sought refuge from the troublous affairs of State in its leafy glades, accompanied by his queen, Elizabeth of York, and Princes Arthur and Henry. The latter was the prince who afterwards as Henry VIII. laid waste Malvern Priory in part, and utterly ruined other Roman Catholic places of worship, undoing his father's work, in his mad hatred of those who refused to free him from his unhappy Catholic bride, Catherine of Aragon. The tiles in the church are remarkable from the fact of their having been made under the superintendence of the holy fathers at a kiln on the priory farm, and there are few churches in England that possess such a quantity of encaustic tiles ; many of them date from 1450, and some of them bear the armorial bearings of the patrons of the building, viz. : Edward the Confessor ; Bohun, Earl of Hereford ; Gilbert Clare, Earl of Gloucester ; Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick, and many

others. The monks' stalls are very old, and are worthy of attention, and the sub-sella, or under seats, are carved grotesquely, and depict secular subjects as well as sacred.

The next morning we got up early, and hiring a carriage drove off to see "ye faithfull citie" of Worcester. It was a drive of eight miles in length and took us through some very pretty rural English scenery. Hop-fields full of the clinging vines, orchards where the trees were heavy with the ripening apples and pears, green, lush-looking meadows where the cattle stood knee-deep in the flowery grasses, past queer white-washed heavily-beamed cottages and spacious mansions, through the little old-world village of Powick, once the seat of John Beauchamp, promoted to the dignity of baron by Henry VII., and celebrated as the scene of an encounter between the Royalists and Parliamentary forces in 1642, and the battle of Powick Bridge in 1651; and two miles further on was Worcester, on the eastern bank of the Severn, and nearly in the middle of the county, which takes its name from it. The cathedral is of red sandstone, in form double cross and of Gothic architecture. Its tower is 200 feet high. The reredos is of alabaster, malachite, gold and lapis lazuli, and near it is the gilt effigy of King John. In the cloisters are curious stone troughs, which were water troughs for the monks' refectory. After leaving the cathedral we went to the ancient gateway known as King Edgar's Tower, and descending the steps on the right invaded the registrar's domains, who most kindly showed us the marriage contract of one "William *Shagspere* with one Anne Hathway, 25th of Elizabeth, 1582." This was a curious old parchment document, carefully framed and glazed and quite undecipherable to ordinary eyes, though the gentleman who showed it to us managed to make out the greater part of it.

Of course we visited the Porcelain Works, and saw the stone, flint, china clay, felspar and calcined bones, that are used in the manufacture of the beautiful Worcester china. The process was most interesting from beginning to end. The mills, with huge pans, where they grind the stone, the slip house, the thrower, who works the potter's wheel, receiving from his assistant a lump of clay which he throws on the head of the wheel, pressing it with both hands, the rotary movement causing it to rise in a cone, which he depresses, and then allows to rise again, inserting his thumb into the mass, fashioning the outside with his right hand.

This is the way in which bowls and cups are made. After being pressed in a mould to remove some of the moisture, the handles are fixed on with a little liquid clay, called slip, and the cups are then placed in oval seggars, ranged on china rings to keep them straight, on a bed of finely-ground flint. The seggars, when full, are piled one over the other most carefully in the oven, and the oven is heated to a white heat, which takes about forty hours, and is left for a further forty-eight hours until it is cool. In the dipping-room are huge tubs of glaze, made from glass chemically prepared from borax, flint, lead, &c., ground very fine, until it assumes the consistency of cream. From the dipping-room the ware is taken to the drying stove, where the glaze is dried on the ware ; after that it goes to the glost oven, and is fired for sixteen hours ; when cool, some thirty-six hours later, it is removed and sent to be decorated by the painters and gilders, and it is very interesting to watch the artists engaged in drawing birds, flowers, or landscapes, as some of the older men work without anything to copy from, and design as they go along. In the museum attached to the works are beautiful specimens of porcelain, dating from 1751, and some of the celebrated "Flight and Barr" china.

From the porcelain works we went to the Guildhall to see the portrait of George III., who honoured the Corporation with his presence on August 8th, 1788. In one of the lower rooms of this fine Queen Anne building are some perfect specimens of Cromwellian armour : backs, breasts, morions, pikes, said to have been found on the field of battle in 1651, when Charles I. was defeated on the heights above the city ; and when his troops gave way, and he saw defeat was inevitable, he passed through Sidbury Gate, while his devoted cavaliers upset a hay wagon at the gateway, which was very narrow, blocking the way and thus enabling him to escape his enemies. Bignal, a Royalist, brought a horse ready saddled for the king, and he hurried to his quarters in the Corn Market, and when Colonel Cobbet found that he was there, King Charles, in a disguise, went out at the back, as Cromwell's colonel drew rein at the front, and, remounting Bignal's horse, rode away with Lord Wilmot, escaping his foes for a while.

The Guildhall is further embellished on the outside by life-size statues of Charles I. and Charles II. The latter is remarkably like the waxen effigy of the "Merrie Monarch" that glowers in

a glass case in the room above Canon Islip's chapel in Westminster Abbey. There are some remarkable timber houses in Friar Street, with peaked gables and overhanging upper stories, and quarried windows that look as if they had been built when Good Queen Bess reigned over England. In Sidbury Street is the old Commandry, a college for the adult blind, after visiting which, we hurried to the station and took the train on to Evesham, a drowsy little town, lying between Bredon Hill and Edge Hill, on a peninsula formed by the river Avon, and possessing a venerable and hoary abbey, of which only the tower remains, founded by Egwin, third Bishop of Worcester, who became first abbot of the monastery attached to it.

The battle between Simon Montfort, Earl of Leicester, and Prince Edward, afterwards King Edward I., was fought near Evesham on 4th August, 1263, and the former was killed, with almost all the barons who had taken up arms against the weak Henry III. We were very tired when we got back to our rose-embowered cottage, and quite ready for "the cup that cheers." Nevertheless, the next morning we started early in a *char-à-banc* for the Wych Pass, a deep artificial cutting made through the solid rock of the hill, and now forming part of the road to Ledbury. Every curve and turn of this road, which is 900 feet above the level of the sea, unfolds a scene of rare and romantic beauty. On one side it is rugged and mountainous, on the other, level and highly cultivated. On the east we commanded views of Worcestershire, and on driving through the pass we emerged on the Herefordshire side of the Malvern Hills, and all the way up to the Herefordshire Beacon we enjoyed a series of most lovely views.

When arrived there we alighted, and climbed the hill to see the British camp on its summit, which is most interesting. Within its ramparts and ditches our Celtic forefather, Caractacus, and his brave Silures, defied imperial Rome's victorious legions. It was the place of divine oracles, a temple wherein was practised the terrible Druidical mysteries, and the seat of council and judgment, as well as a fortified stronghold. It covers an area of about 43 acres, is 1,100 yards long, and 2,970 yards in circumference, and anciently commanded the only pass through the Malvern hills. After scrambling down a somewhat steep path, we walked to Colwall to see Burstner's Cross, so called from the

preaching-cross set up by Walm and Moorall, the first Silurian missionaries. Here in the midst of the heathenish and cruel Druidical worship, they preached glad tidings of Christianity to their Celtic countrymen, and here to lend support to them came Bran, the venerable father of Caractacus. In this spot, in 1650, a peasant digging in his garden found a richly-jewelled coronet, supposed to have been dropped in battle or flight by an early British chieftain. A little beyond we saw the early home of the poetess Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Hope End, an eastern type of mansion with minarets, and farther on we came to Bosbury, a quaint, old-world village, with grand timber houses, and ornamental barge-boards, and a church with a detached tower of three stages, some eighty feet to the south of the chancel. Once this place was the seat of the Knights Hospitallers. That afternoon we indulged in a drive right round the hills, for which we paid the large sum of one shilling each.

The next day we set off by train for Ledbury, which, though *not* in Worcestershire, we had a great desire to see. We found it a very dull town, prettily situated on the river Ledden, and containing some quaint timber houses, and many red ones of Queen Anne's time, and some evidently of the Georgian period, flat square, bald-looking buildings, hideously ugly. The most interesting thing we thought in Ledbury was the queer old timber-framed market-house, built of timber and lath, the latter white-washed, the former blackened, raised on sixteen sturdy oak pillars. As we had never seen anything like it in all our wanderings, we examined it attentively, and speculated as to why it should have been perched up aloft on the oaken pillars in such a curious fashion. It was evidently very, very old, perhaps as old as the hospital of St. Katherine near it, which was founded in 1232 by Bishop Hugh Folliatt for "six single men, two widows, and two men and their wives." The poor women come off second best by this arrangement, unless the men had a plurality of "wives." The church has a detached tower like so many in Italy, and exhibits a transition from Romanesque to Perpendicular style. The wooden gates are shown with bullet-holes in them; they were damaged at the time of the Parliamentary wars, we supposed. From the church we proceeded to the Feathers Hotel, refreshed the inner man, and hiring a four-wheeled dog-cart drove over to Eastnor Castle, Lady Henry Somerset's residence. This place, rebuilt by

her father Earl Somers, from designs by Smirke, in the style of Edward I.'s reign, combines the appearance of a feudal castle, with all the comforts inside of a modern house, and contains some lovely tapestry and fine pictures and armour. The grounds are charming, and the myriads of white doves that have their abode at the massive gateway add greatly to the picturesque effect. With the exception of the tower, the church was rebuilt in 1852, and contains many beautiful monuments to the Cocks family. On our fifth day we walked along the Kone, a fine stretch of level grass, where equestrians can enjoy a good gallop, through Malvern Wells, up the steep road that leads to Wind's Point, the pretty pointed gabled house, with shady, green verandahs, where Jenny Lind (Madame Otto Goldschmidt) passed the last four years of her life.

Amid the Norwegian-like scenery, on the summit of the Wind-blown hill, where the breezes swirl and riot, some thousand feet above the sea level, and the last rays of the setting sun linger lovingly long after the valleys and vales below are steeped in shade. And what an incomparable view greeted her eyes every day, Tewkesbury, Gloucester, Cheltenham, the far-off Salopian hills, the Black mountains, the forest of Dean, and all the fair orchard land that lies between. The house was built by a Captain Johnson, who blasted the rock away, and built it in the sort of rocky quarry he thus made, spending a large sum of money on the operation, and at one time it was known by the significant title of "Johnson's Folly." Jenny Lind bought it in 1883, and died there on the 2nd of November, 1887. A handsome red granite cross marks her grave in the pretty, peaceful cemetery that lies to the east of Great Malvern, and on it is a medallion of white marble, on which is carved a harp and the one word "Excelsior."

The following morning we went down to the station, and were conveyed by a Midland train in about thirty minutes to Tewkesbury, of ancient fame, which, like a *passée* belle, exists upon her historical reputation, and a gigantic flour mill. Tewkesbury is partly in Worcestershire and partly in Gloucestershire. We wandered through a long street till we arrived at the abbey, the foundation of which dates from 715, when Oddo and Doddo, Dukes of Mercia, founded a monastery for monks of the Benedictine Order, and built an Anglo-Saxon church here, in the

reigns of Ethelred and Ethelbald. Tradition says that Eadburgha, daughter of "Offa the Terrible," King of Mercia, murdered her husband Beortric, King of the West Saxons, in the year 800, and that his body was buried by Hugo, a Mercian earl, in his priory of Tewkesbury. This earl's tomb was seen on the north side of the nave of the abbey by Leland, in Henry VIII.'s reign.

The greater part of the present building is Norman, and was erected by Robert Fitz-Hamon, nephew-in-law of William the Conqueror, though there are still some remains of the Early Saxon style to be seen here and there. It is built in the form of a cross, and a tower supported by four arches stands upon the intersection. The pillars are cylindrical and massive, and form an arcade of noble columns. But the effect is a little spoiled by the groined and handsomely-decorated roof, which was added in the fourteenth century, being too low for the size of the pillars. The aisles were also rebuilt and a group of chapels projecting from them like a French *chevet*. The three Norman apsidals of the old plan are still distinctly visible. Under the tower lies Prince Edward, the unfortunate son of Henry VI. and Margaret of Anjou; a brass tablet marks the spot, on which is the following inscription: "Here lies Edward, Prince of Wales, cruelly slain whilst a youth, Anno Domini 1471, on 4th May. Alas! for the savagery of men. Thou wert the sole light of thy mother and the last hope of thy race." Two daggers are on the plate, those of Gloucester and Clarence, by whom he is said to have been murdered. Curiously enough the Duke of Clarence's tomb is at the back of the altar. He lies alongside his wife, Isabella, daughter of Richard Neville, the king-maker, sister of Anne, who was first the wife of the unfortunate Prince Edward, and next espoused Richard, Duke of Gloucester, afterwards Richard III. These ladies were grand-daughters of Isabella Despencer, Countess of Warwick.

The Despencer monument, north of the altar steps, was erected to the memory of Hugh, and his wife Elizabeth, daughter of William Montacute, Earl of Salisbury. This lady, on her first husband's death in 1348, married Guy de Brien, Lord of Welwyn, who was standard-bearer to the English king at the famous battle of Crecy (A.D. 1346), and was knighted on the field for his bravery. It would seem, however, that the first was the favourite, for by her special desire she was buried by Despencer. Poor Sir Guy lies all alone, in the cold, on the opposite side of the ambu-

latory, his monument forming the screen of St. Margaret's Chapel. There are full-length alabaster figures of all three, rather flat as to nose, otherwise in a good state of preservation. A nephew of the last named, one Edward Despencer, fought with the Black Prince at Poitiers in 1356, and the chapel on the south side was erected by his widow, Elizabeth de Burghersh. His effigy, in armour, kneeling, is on the top, facing the altar, and is considered a great curiosity, as there is not another one like it in England. Near the vestry door, in the southern wall, is the tomb of Alan, one of the abbots of the monastery, sometime prior of Canterbury, friend and biographer of Thomas à Becket, who died in 1202. The coffin is of Purbeck marble, and lies under a plain semi-quatrefoil arch. It was opened in 1765, and when the lid was taken off the body was in a surprisingly perfect condition, considering that it had been there upwards of five hundred years. Even the folds of the drapery were distinct. The old door of the sacristy is very curious; it is plated and banded with iron, fastened by huge nails, and looks as though it could even now resist the onslaught of furious soldiery. By the altar, high up against the wall, is an oaken turreted sort of miniature castle for the sacring bell, and in the chancel is a stone figure with curious banded mail armour, said to be Lord Wenlock, who was killed at the battle of Tewkesbury by the Duke of Somerset, who, in a mad fit of rage, clove his skull in two, though they were both fighting for the Lancastrians. Wiseacres, however, say that this armour is of much earlier date than the battle of Tewkesbury. Quite a hundred years earlier. There is one peculiarity about this figure, there are only socks on the feet; generally they are represented covered with mail like the rest of the body. The why and wherefore of this peculiarity I could not discover. The stained glass in some of the windows, date 1330, is peculiarly rich and beautiful in colour, and depicts secular figures, the de Clares and Despenchers. There were many, many more things of interest to be seen in this splendid abbey, but we could not linger longer. We were dying to see the "Bloody Meadow," where the unfortunate flying Lancastrians were slaughtered, and the battlefield where the actual struggle took place. We inquired our way, and found the latter at last, and I must own that it looked very like any other green and luxuriant field. After gazing at it and trying to picture the terrible strife

that took place there on 4th May, 1471, we got back to the road, and made our way to the Union, turning from there down Windmill Hill Lane ; at the bottom of this lane to the right was a long, narrow field and a long, broad one, and as we were quite at a loss to know which was *the* Bloody Meadow, we tapped at the door of a little lodge, and asked a grey-haired and venerable old man, who answered our summons if he would kindly point us out the right spot. He came at once, though he was terribly afflicted, and bent almost to the ground as he walked, shaking all the time. We asked him what was the matter with him, and he replied gravely, " At first I thought it was viper's dance, onny the dooctor 'ee tells me it's my spinal coord." Later on during a chat he gave us the astounding piece of information that his son was " in sarvice and now druvs a prawn, and 'is liver is green ! " At first we thought it was some dreadful disease the gentleman who drove a " prawn " suffered from, but finally we came to the conclusion that it was his coat that was green, and not that useful organ, the liver. But this is digression. To return to our subject, the meadow was narrow, with sloping sides, and in the middle was an old withy-bordered watercourse.

Tradition has it that a large number of Lancastrian soldiers who were flying in hot haste from the Gaston's battlefield before the victorious Yorkists, were overtaken here, and slain in such numbers that the low-lying parts of the meadow were " knee-deep in gore." Probably the story has grown in process of being handed down from generation to generation ; still the position and appearance of the field suggests that there was some cause for the not very pleasant appellation it has received. After studying the scene of that desperate fray where Margaret of Anjou met the crushing and overwhelming sorrow of her life, we walked across the meadow, climbed a couple of stiles, and came to the Severn, where Margaret passed the ford at Lower Lode, when she escaped from her relentless enemies. She had committed herself to the care of two poor monks belonging to a small religious house in the neighbourhood, who knew well where the ford existed, and who led their royal mistress's horse to the other side, where she found refuge in the house of one Master Thomas Payne, who, with his wife Ursula, met the poor fugitive queen with reverence and respect, and entreated her to rest in their house, which she did for one night, going on next day to seek

some surer place of refuge. They still show, at Payne's Place, a pretty room in the eastern wing of the house, called "the Queen's Room," where Queen Margaret slept after the disastrous day at Tewkesbury.

After three days of hiding, the queen was captured and held as a prisoner of state until her father paid the sum of fifty thousand crowns as ransom, the money being lent to him by Louis XI. of France. She died in France a few years afterward, in 1482.

We strolled on across green and luxuriant fields till we came to the Bell Inn, a curious and ancient hostelry, with peaked gables and black cross-beams, and a delicious shady bowling green. After luncheon we walked past the abbey, and took a look at the old gateway, with its angels projecting on the outer side and its gargoyles on the inner, and then strolled on down the High Street, admiring the quaint wooden houses, with their projecting upper stories and quarried windows, took a peep at the "Bear," with its queer signboard, and then went on to the bridge to see the confluence of the Severn and the Avon, and very pretty and picturesque it is, the two rivers running side by side for some way, only divided by a narrow vividly green field, where the sleek cattle feed ; the splash of the weir, as it falls in a shower of silvery spray ; the hoary old grey arches of the bridge, with peaked buttresses, coeval probably with the abbey ; and a background of trees, and lanes, and gentle undulations, and further off of mighty hills, and over all the blue arching dome of heaven, flecked here and there with a fleecy white cloud.

Our last morning we spent in a visit to Little Malvern, where a Benedictine priory was founded in 1171 by two brothers, Joceline and Edred, in subordination to the parent house at Worcester. In 1538, at the dissolution of the lesser monasteries, this priory was granted to Henry Russell, Esq., of Strensham, and in 1734 passed by marriage to the Beringtons. Little Malvern Court is built upon the site of the old priory, and part of the original building has been worked up into the present mansion, with its quaint gables and tower. We looked with interest at the latter, for near the summit is a secret room, difficult of access, where no doubt many a fugitive has hidden in bygone troublous times. The church, originally Norman, was suffered to fall into decay, and was rebuilt in 1482 by John Alcock, Bishop

of Worcester. It is in the form of a cross, and from the centre rises an embattled tower, which is now covered with a tiled roof that gives it rather a comical appearance, and certainly looks sadly out of place, while the nave is gone, and other parts are in a state of decay. In the lower compartments of the eastern window are some figures, conjectured to be those of Elizabeth Woodville, queen of Edward IV., and some of the royal children. Afterwards we drove to the Rhydd, and then to see the ancient abode of the Lechmeres at Severn End, which was given to them at the time of the Conquest, and is a most interesting specimen of a timber-grained house, having carved barge-boards and ornamental brick chimneys. The oak panelling in the interior and the embossed ceilings are of the time of Henry VII., and are in a wonderful state of preservation.

We longed to linger in this old place, that bore everywhere the ineffaceable stamp of the past, but time pressed, so we drove back by way of Madresfield Court, the seat of Earl Beauchamp—a moated Elizabethan mansion, with an avenue of stately elms—and feasted our eyes for the last time on the beautiful views, and then, after a hurried luncheon, we drove off to the station, where we fortunately caught a through train that landed us in a few hours once more in smoky London, far, far from the great green Beacon Hills, and the clear bracing air, steady unclouded sunshine, lovely pastoral views, and all the sweet sights, sounds, and scents of the country.

An Episode.

CHAPTER I.

PRETTY Mrs. Sargent was ill at ease.

It was not often the fascinating widow had any cause for anxiety, and Clement Dalzell was the last man upon earth from whom she expected to find it.

She was a pretty woman, an exceedingly pretty woman ; however her friends might differ as to her degree of fascination, not one of them dared question her exceeding charm, or the beauty of her glowing dark eyes, ruby lips and perfect teeth. Moreover, she was decidedly well off. The late Sargent having left a comfortable provision for his attractive relict, she gave delightful little dinners, where the claret was heated to just the proper degree and the champagne iced enough to bring out its tone. That she was a woman with a history no one questioned, and as little did her nearest and dearest friends doubt the fact that there would be some few pages added to the record, ere time wrote his lines too deeply round the red mouth, or set his crow's feet in the vicinity of those expressive eyes. She had admirers by the dozen—that was only to be expected. A well-dowered, fascinating widow, without encumbrances, of course she had her following, but no man in London could say she had smiled upon him more than politeness dictated, except Clement Dalzell.

Now, Clement Dalzell was somebody. A rising barrister, with ample means, mothers and chaperones had angled for him for two whole seasons ; beauties smiled upon him, and bluff fathers—men quite above seconding their wives in matters matrimonial, or thought to be so—had invited him to shoot pheasants and fish preserved waters where salmon lay crying out to be captured. There was scarcely a country house, where there were daughters, that did not fling its doors wide to the clever young fellow who had inherited a tidy fortune, and was certain to mount to the topmost twig of the legal tree.

In the beginning of his third season of triumphant escape from the matrimonial market, he met Genevive Sargent.

She had been some years in London at the time ; her delightful flat, overlooking the park, made a most harmonious setting to her dark beauty. She wore good diamonds, dressed to perfection, and had the prettiest foot in the world. Then her ideas of men and things ran in the same lines as his own ; there was the faintest flavour of Bohemianism about her, and that suited him too. He might lounge in her pretty rooms, and if he occasionally indulged in a tiny cigarette she made no objection. In fact, she was a charming, unconventional woman, who laughed at Mrs. Grundy, while she still kept well inside the pale, and who was the most delightful company in the world. As to the deceased Sargent, he asked no questions. She told him her husband had been many years her senior, that her brief married life had not been all lilies and roses, and that, if she could meet a congenial spirit, she might possibly think of another union. But the spirit must be a very congenial one, and the circumstances in every respect desirable, before she could dream of resigning the liberty which had become sweet to her ; and Clement thought she was right to be careful. So it went on for nearly a year. The mammas who had marked down the young lawyer looked "all Sheffield" at the fascinating widow, when she appeared with the prize in her train ; and the prize seemed exceedingly happy in the company he had chosen—that was the worst of it.

But as yet, although there had been much confidence and a little—a very little—love-making between them, there was nothing in the shape of an engagement. Perhaps they were both too wise to venture upon anything definite before they were sure of themselves ; and Genevive was an exceedingly clever little woman. She was not in love with him, but had he suddenly drawn off she would have felt hurt ; perhaps more deeply than she herself imagined. Moreover, she knew the charm of philandering, and with a good deal of dexterity, contrived to treat the young man with a frank friendliness which held him fast. All this had been amusing her for a year, or a little longer, when the crisis she wished to keep off arrived, and the ardent youth almost compelled her to receive him upon a different footing.

"How much longer are we to go on like this, Jennie?" he said to her, as they sat together in her cosy boudoir. "Don't

you know that I love you, you tantalizing little woman? Don't you know that you are absolutely necessary to my happiness? Yet here you are, keeping me at just the same distance from you as I was last year. It isn't fair, Jennie, and you know it."

She certainly did look distractingly pretty that evening. She had on a yellow tea-gown, of some mysterious stuff that fell round her in folds, which an artist might go wild to copy, and in her hand she held a fan, gorgeous with the plumage of tropical birds, while the diamond pins which fastened her masses of lustrous black hair caught the fire-light, and twinkled like stars between the clouds of a dappled winter sky. Leaning forward and looking into her face, he could see her eyes grow misty through the wavings of her fan, and the voice which answered him had a low thrill in it which his heart beat quick to hear.

"Are we not quite happy?" she said. "Why should we alter a relationship which is so pleasant?"

"I want you for my wife," he answered. "Have you not known that all along?" He rose from his seat and approached her where she reclined in her deep arm-chair. "You must answer me one way or other, Jennie," he whispered, dropping on his knee at her side and obtaining possession of her hand. "We know each other so well; we are bound to be far happier."

She let her hand lie in his, but she drew back from the arm he would have cast round her. "I don't see it," she said. "My experience was not so perfect as to make me venture again, but"—and she dropped her fan to lay her hand lightly on his crisp, curling hair—"perhaps it might be different now. I am older and, I think, wiser; and you?—are you quite sure of yourself, Clement?"

"I am—perfectly certain that there is not another woman in all the world," he said hastily, as he drew her to him. "Jennie, you don't doubt my faith?"

Still with her hand on his hair, she whispered softly, "I do not know. Life is a strange medley. You may be very devoted to me now, but will it hold? Remember, I have had my experiences, and I have learned that even the hottest affection cools, and that it is a very rare description of love"—she made a little pause before uttering the word—"which will stand the stress of time. Clement, I have not much faith in men."

"I don't ask you to have faith in men," he said tenderly. "I ask you to have faith in one particular man—which is me."

"That's just it," she replied quickly. "If I put faith in you, and you fail me, what then? No, dear friend; best for us both that we remain as we are. Believe me, I am right."

"You are not right," he rejoined hotly. "Jennie, I believe you have a heart as cold as an icicle. If you had not, you would understand me better."

"Do you know, I think it is because I understand you so well," she answered. "Clement, a truce to this; let us remain upon the old footing, and be content with things as they are."

"That is a very hard saying," he replied. "Do you mean me to think you will not marry me, Jennie?"

She did not want him to think so, although she most certainly did wish him to believe she was not anxious on the subject. "He has been so 'rushed' by other women that I must teach him I am very different to the general run," she thought. Aloud she said softly, "Is it not better to preserve a tender friendship than merge a devoted friend in matrimony, which might convert him into a careless husband, Clement?"

"I don't understand you," he said bluntly, and he rose from his knee. "Jennie, you are an enigma."

She smiled up at him as he stood in the firelight, a handsome, well-bred young fellow, looking uncomfortable and perplexed at this particular moment, but, perhaps, all the better in her eyes: did not her power to annoy him show her perfect empire over him?

"Suppose I teach you the solution," she said, thinking how very handsome he was, and how sorry she would be to lose him. "Your friendship is very sweet to me, Clement."

"How you harp upon friend and friendship," he said testily. "Can't you drop the words, and call me by a dearer name?"

"You really know so little about me," she said. "I might be a mere adventuress, for all you know of my antecedents."

"Now—if any one but yourself said that——" he cried angrily.

"You would knock them down," she said, looking at him with undisguised admiration in her expressive eyes. "I'm not an adventuress. My money is safe in the respectable funds. I could tell you my whole history from my youth upwards, without reservation. There is only one action of my life which I look back to with so much as a blush and that is my marriage. A

girl of nineteen, I married a man nine-and-twenty years older than myself, for a home, and without an atom of affection. But I was only a child. I did not know what I was doing, and, in fact, I had no choice. I was told Mr. Sargent wished to marry me, and that was all. He was not unkind to me. He neither beat me or starved me—and he died. Poor man, it was the kindest action of his life ; at least, that part of it which concerned me. I am very happy in these pretty rooms of mine. But you have made me think of—of, taking a new element into my life. I wish you hadn't, Clement."

She had risen to her feet as she spoke, and now they were standing side by side on the hearthrug, with the firelight playing fantastically over them, and only the murmur of the distant street to remind them there were any other lives in the wide world beside their own. He made a step nearer and clasped her to him. "Let me make up for the loveless years," he said, with his lips close to her ear. "Don't play fast and loose with me any longer. Say honestly that you will be my wife, and put an end to this shilly-shally, Jennie ; we'll both be ever so much the happier for it."

Just for one brief moment she let herself rest upon his heart, and their lips met ; then, with a long, low sigh, she drew herself away. "There would be so much to give up," she whispered. "We should both find it difficult :"

"No, no," he cried eagerly. "There would be nothing to give up compared with what we would gain. Come, Jennie, make me happy by a word."

It trembled on her lips, the monosyllable which would have changed her whole life, but at the moment the door opened, and her trim page announced, "Mrs. Witherby."

Clement Dalzell went away in a rage.

CHAPTER II.

MRS. WITHERBY was also a widow, but a lady of matured years, owning to eight-and-forty, with a daughter who looked nearly as old and several grandchildren. She had no household duties, no occupation, and took no interest in public affairs, centring her powers upon the interests and occupations of her neighbours. She was rather a trying person, and Genevive Sargent did not reckon her amongst her devoted friends.

"There, now," she said, dropping into the chair which Clement had recently abandoned, "I've frightened Mr. Dalzell away. Don't you wish me at the other side of nowhere? I'm sure if I had had an idea I was interrupting such a nice little *tête-à-tête*, I wouldn't have come in; but I just wanted to tell you that Mrs. Vere has been in trouble with her servants again—what a wretched home she must have, always fighting with her cook," and so on and so on, until Genevive could have torn the feathers out of her fan with sheer vexation.

"Now, about Mr. Dalzell," the visitor said, lowering her voice. "My dear Mrs. Sargent, did you ever hear how he treated Amy Lawrence, or how badly he behaved to Susan Watkins? He was all but engaged to *her*, you know. Used to go to her father's place for the hunting every winter, and let the poor child imagine he was devoted to her, while all the time he was corresponding with Amy Lawrence. I saw the letters myself, so there could be no mistake about it."

"None whatever," Genevive said dreamily; "I know."

"Oh, do you? I thought he would have kept it from you. I daresay he told you they thought of bringing an action for breach of promise against him?"

"But they didn't," Genevive said, with a slight ring of impatience in her voice. "And—have you heard from Mrs. Gore lately?"

"From Fanny? no; I don't expect to hear every mail. Poor thing, she has quite enough to do with all those babies, and it worries me to have her continual complaints."

"I often wonder you don't go to her," Mrs. Sargent said. "The climate is lovely, and the voyage not in the least trying. I'm sure you would enjoy it."

Mrs. Witherby stared at her hostess in something not unlike defiance.

"Me?" she cried. "Go to Australia?"

"Why not?" Genevive inquired innocently. "When your only daughter is there and, in broken health, is it not the most natural thing in the world for you to be with her?"

"Such a thing is out of the question," she replied sharply. "I never thought of it."

"Really! Now do you know I think that odd. If my only daughter was at the other side of the world, I would consider it

my duty to be—if not under her roof—and circumstances might not allow of that—at least within call: and you have such sweet grandchildren, you know.”

Perhaps the pretty widow had lost her temper, but she could not possibly have made a worse “hit” at the lady than this mention of her descendants—also, the implied hint of disagreement with her son-in-law. In fact, the daintily-uttered little speech cut all round, and the lady laid it up in the recesses of her memory as a debt to be discharged in due time.

She did not, as she had intended, remain to dine with her friend, for Mrs. Sargent lighted a taper and glanced at the clock, with the remark that the Mudford Jukes dined at eight, and were rather particular as to the punctuality of their guests, which remark conveyed a hint, or something stronger, that the little lady did not wish her to stay.

Genevive was not going out to dinner, only she wished to be alone and have a quiet hour in which to meditate upon this change in circumstances which was being forced upon her. She had crossed the Rubicon. She knew she liked this man far more than she chose to acknowledge to herself, and she shut her eyes and thrilled. What if she consented and became his wife? The loveless years would be forgotten, or atoned. She might hope for peaceful days, shielded by the affection of a man who had chosen her out of a world of women—a man who had never cared for any one but her. There was something very sweet in that consciousness. As to these tales of Mrs. Witherby’s telling, she knew what they were worth. That girl, Susan Watkins, had schemed and plotted how she could get him into her power; and as to Amy Lawrence, she knew the truth of that story too. She could trust him, and she would trust him. If only he came back now! He might know he was welcome; and it was not unlikely he would return. He often had returned before. But the slow hours drew by, and he did not come back; neither did he write, as she expected. The truth was that, upon leaving her, vexed at the turn things had taken, Clement Dalzell met an old friend, recently returned from India. The men belonged to the same club and were both young. They dined together, and after dinner lounged into a well-known home of gay burlesque; and John Mather having one or two acquaintances in the *corps de ballet*, they spent a pleasant evening. Mrs. Witherby went on to

another friend's abode. This lady was an invalid, who seldom left her room, but who was always delighted to hear and repeat the local gossip which was Mrs. Witherby's staple commodity. In half-an-hour they were discussing Mrs. Sargent's very marked flirtation with "that dangerous young man, Clement Dalzell," and by the following afternoon half that lady's intimate friends were speculating whether he would marry her—or she him. He came the next afternoon, but Genevive's rooms were filled with her friends, who looked significantly at one another and whispered little comments upon their probable engagement. It was impossible for him to outstay the crowd, as he had promised Mather to dine with him again, and perhaps again visit the charming troupe of damsels, who were so frankly pleased to see them—especially that charming blonde who sang the "patter" song, but whose blue eyes looked as if they had known tears.

The dinner was good, and the burlesque at the Hilarity improved upon a second visit; also, the pretty blonde with the pathetic blue eyes appeared far more interesting when he spoke to her the second time. She held aloof from the others, and took no part in their jests, neither did she remain in the merry company after her duties were fulfilled.

"Pity of that nice little soul," Mather said, as they walked away together. "She comes of a highly-respectable lot. Knew her when she was a nice little girl in her teens—before I went out to India. Her people are Nonconformists; she was well brought up; never would have seen the inside of a theatre—much less danced and sang in one—if her father hadn't married a second time. Second wife drew the cord too tight, and poor Tiny couldn't stand it. She ran off with a fellow in a cavalry regiment: decent lad—married her straight enough—but died in a year, and his people won't have anything to say to her. Her father, too, died about the same time. Step-mother took possession of every farthing, and won't allow her to have even her own mother's money. It's a hard case, and the creature hasn't the money to take proceedings against her step-mother or her father-in-law. She sings her little song and dances her dance to keep herself and her baby. Poor Tiny"—and John Mather sighed.

"But, surely she could get some one to fight her battle," Clement said. "I'm certain I could put her in the way of it."

"It would be the greatest charity in life," Mather said hastily.

"My dear fellow, she is just the nicest little creature in the world, and as straight as straight. She has all the proofs of her marriage—certificate and all that, and her mother's marriage settlement. The whole thing would be perfectly plain sailing to a man who understood such things. If it had been in my line, I'd have done it myself; but, you see, I'm not in the law, so my good intentions go for nothing."

"But I am in the law—and if I could help her——" Clement said impulsively.

"Look here! come round to her little place with me on Sunday afternoon. It's the only day she's free. You can talk things over with her, and see what's to be done."

Clement hesitated. Sunday had hitherto been devoted to Genevive, and how could he absent himself after that half admittal of her affection the other evening? But then, would not Jennie herself approve of his doing a chivalrous action, and helping a woman in distress? She would forgive him when he explained the circumstances. "I'll write," he thought; "that will be the best way."

So Sunday came round in due course of time, and Clement accompanied his friend to the small but very comfortable rooms which "Mrs. Eglantine" occupied, in a quiet street so far west as to be miles beyond the magic circle of the West End.

Her case appeared so simple to the keen-eyed man of law as to be a foregone conclusion in her favour. He told her so. She looked at him with eyes which swam in tears. "For baby's sake," she said, "not for my own, I thank you from my heart. I don't want my boy to grow up in the knowledge that his mother is singing low songs and dancing low dances upon the stage to feed and clothe him."

And Clement thought what a lovely thing maternal affection must be. Once he had taken the case in hand, he resolved to go into it thoroughly. To this end he made sundry excursions into the country, having more than one rather stormy interview with the starched step-mother, whose severity had driven his poor client from her father's house. She told him her husband had excluded his lost child from all participation in his property, regarding her as his great disgrace, and that he had absolutely forbidden all mention of her name from the day she quitted his roof. But Clement found out several discrepancies in the lady's state-

ment, and a valuable assistant was discovered in the person of a local solicitor, who had done business for "Tiny's" father in time past. Dalzell had not the slightest difficulty in making out a case of "undue influence," and, with all the professional side of his character awake and alert, he half forgot the attraction in that pretty flat overlooking the park.

Spring glided on. He paid his visits to Genevive Sargent much as usual, and although he became quite as confidential as ever with her, somehow or other he omitted to mention "Tiny," whose name was in reality Eglantine Yorke. He told Mrs. Sargent he was engaged upon an important case, and said that in her presence he wished to forget there was such a thing as business in the world.

CHAPTER III.

EGLANTINE told him her pitiful story. After all, it was a very simple one, but told in the stillness of a Sunday afternoon, with the disinherited baby playing on the hearthrug, and the sad, soft blue eyes looking so innocently from the child to the man who was helping her to right that child's wrong, Dalzell found it very interesting. Was it strange that he also found the shabby little room, with only a few poor cheap flowers to brighten it, almost as pleasant a lounge as that other dainty drawing-room, where costly exotics faded in the perfumed air, and where every chair was a perfect "Sleepy Hollow" for luxury? It was strange, too, that this blue-eyed woman, with her gentle, clinging manner and her almost childish reverence for his learning and ability, presented to his mind a far more feminine ideality than the beautiful queen who accepted his homage as her royal right.

Mather did not accompany him to the house in the far west now: he found Mrs. Sargent a far more congenial companion than the other widow, with her sad story and her low "cooing" voice; but he was loyal to his friend, and inside the walls of Mrs. Sargent's home, Mrs. Yorke's name was never mentioned.

But Genevive was ill at ease—Clement had been her bond-slave for so long that now she could not comprehend his defection. He came to her house, but with a woman's keen intuition she began to

"Know the change and feel it,"

long before she acknowledged the fact to her own heart. He

told her that he had staked his professional reputation on the winning of this case which was occupying his thoughts ; but when she asked him to explain the nature of the action that could so interest a man who usually took life very easy, he merely said it was a will case—entirely a family matter—something of no public interest—and talked of other matters.

So the days slipped by, and Mather improved his opportunities with the well-dowered widow, until Mrs. Witherby whispered to her most intimate bosom friends that “ Really, she thought Mrs. Sargent was not behaving well—because, after all, she had encouraged Dalzell to throw over Amy Lawrence, and it was cruel of her to flirt with his friend.” Some echoes of these remarks reached Jennie’s ears and stung her, but she did not alter her manner to her new acquaintance, neither did she attempt to “ draw ” him with regard to Clement’s preoccupation.

As the time drew near for the trial upon which the future of his gentle client depended, Dalzell became conscious of all the issues involved in it. Felix Yorke was a younger son at the time of his marriage ; now his elder brothers were dead, and if the marriage was substantiated—and he had little doubt of its being so—the boy, who was so dear to his gentle mother, was undoubted heir to a very respectable estate and the reversion of a title. The young lawyer held his tongue about this development of the case, waiting until he could speak with certainty.

In his devotion to the business he had in hand, he was constantly out of town, consulting the old solicitor, who was beating up evidence for him, and who, in a measure, had organized the case. Thus occupied, of course he could not accept half the invitations showered upon him, or even answer in due time the little notes he found piled upon his dressing-table upon his return from these excursions. At length the day of the trial came. “ When it is over,” he thought, “ I’ll tell Jennie the whole story, and get her to call upon poor Tiny. The little thing will want a good deal of coaching up in social matters before she can meet the Yorkes upon equal ground. Poor child ; she will be an apt pupil.”

It never occurred to him that Genevive might be an unwilling teacher.

As he went to the courts he crushed a tiny note from Mrs. Sargent into his pocket. He just glanced at it, and, seeing it

was an invitation to dinner, resolved to send a telegram in answer later on, when his thoughts were less occupied than at the present moment, just as his colleague had given him an important bit of information with regard to the case.

It was a triumph from first to last, and when the opposite counsel had ceased to cross-examine the fair plaintiff, Clement knew her cause was won. But she was forced to return home, as the child was not very well, and the case went on.

"I knew we'd do it," the old solicitor said, rubbing his hands. "I congratulate you, Mr. Dalzell. You made the most telling speech I ever heard. I say, have you telegraphed to her? She'll be anxious to hear, you know."

But Clement knew what he meant to do; and through the glow of a brilliant sunset, he dashed to the shabby little house, which he told himself would be to let in a few days, because the money he had won for Eglantine Yorke was a very considerable sum indeed, and as the mother of a prospective peer, she must move into a better locality without loss of time.

* * * * *

Genevive Sargent put on her prettiest tea-gown; she had ordered a little dinner which would be a perfect poem in banquets. A bottle of '80 champagne was being iced to perfection, and some very choice Madeira, the cream of the deceased Sargent's cellar, was decanted. She had herself seen to the decorations of her dinner table, and now, with her pretty, luxurious boudoir looking a perfect nest of repose, she sat and waited.

"I was a fool to treat him as I did that evening," she thought; "it will not be difficult to let him understand that I—that I regret having pained him—and now that he has been working so hard——" She did not follow up that train of reasoning, but her mind went off at a tangent. What had he been working up with such devotion? What was the special interest which had drawn him so much away? She had never stooped to ask him, but she would ask him now. She would put away all her pride, and suffer her heart to speak—now—now at last; and with the thought she looked at the little clock on her dainty writing table. It was half-past seven; in a few moments he would be here, and then——. She let her head sink back on the cushions, and

suffered her thoughts to wander wide. Faintly, as through a dream, she heard the sound of multitudinous life in the street below, and, in the park beyond, a thrush was singing, while through the stillness of her room she could hear the ticking of the little clock upon her table. The sounds grew fainter and fainter; the walls of her room seemed to expand, then contract again, and the room she saw round her was poor and shabby. It was filled with evening light, and in it sat a woman with a child upon her knee. The woman was young and pretty, with fair hair, like the child's, and wistful blue eyes, which were fixed upon the door. She sprang to her feet, and put the child upon the shabby sofa, as the door opened and Clement Dalzell stood upon the threshold, his hands outstretched, his eyes glowing with pride and joy. The woman looked at him, her face upraised in ecstasy, her hands clasped upon her throbbing bosom. He advanced towards her, and took those trembling hands, while he appeared to speak earnestly and emphatically to her. She bowed her head and wept as she drew away from him. Then he cast his arms around her, and held her fast, as she lay weeping upon his heart. As he raised her face to meet his own, darkness closed upon them, and Genevive Sargent started from her trance as the clock was striking eight.

So short a time, so strange a revelation; but everything was made plain to her. She understood the whole matter. She had lost him, trifled with him once too often; and now another woman stood between them, and the happiness she had let slip was out of reach for ever.

* * * * *

Next morning she had a brief note from him:

"So sorry not to have been able to dine with you to-night. Expect me to-morrow afternoon.

"Yours always,
"C. D."

She was so perfectly mistress of herself that when he arrived at four o'clock she met him with her usual smile.

"I am to offer my congratulations, I suppose," she said. "You seem to have made a very fine speech. You ought to have told me, because I would have gone to hear you speak. It must have been most interesting."

He was ill at ease as he replied that he did not like to see ladies in the law courts, but that if he had thought she would have cared——

"I thought you knew I cared," she said. "I am always interested in the fortunes of my friends," and she smiled upon him with the old brilliancy.

He thought after all this woman is the real mate for a man who wants to get on in the world, and made as if he would take her hand, but she swerved away.

"But your case was over early ; at least, you could have come to tell me of your triumph in time for dinner," she said, still with her bright smile. "Where were you at a quarter-to-eight last evening ?"

His embarrassment increased. "I ? Oh, I went to tell my client," he stammered. "You see, she is very friendless."

"Ah !" the smile grew almost cruel. "And you had to go in person. Doubtless she was grateful. She is a charming person, is she not ?"

"I don't know. She is a pretty little thing," he faltered.

"Affectionate, I suppose, and most grateful to you ?" Genevive Sargent could be merciless when she chose. "She was a dancer at the Hilarity."

"You read her evidence ?"

"Not all of it, it did not interest me. So you went to her after you had won her cause ? and she was grateful, flew to your arms, et cetera."

He looked wonderingly at her. "Who told you ?" he stammered.

"No one told me ; only deny it if you can. I saw you meet—saw it all as I sat here in this room—this chair. Everything was made plain to me, the secret of your extraordinary change," she reddened to her brow, "and I understand. You need not try to defend yourself. I am quite ready to acknowledge that I was in fault. I told you that I had not much faith in men ; recent experiences have not taught me to alter my opinions."

"Jennie !" he cried passionately, "will you not be just to a fellow ? Will you not give me a chance of speaking in my own defence ?"

"There is no need," she answered icily. "I shall not forbid you my house—that would be making quite too much of an affair,

which after all is not of such consequence—but the old footing is destroyed.”

He knew it was, as he went down the familiar steps and made his way to the shabby room in Hammersmith, where Eglantine received him as her beneficent Providence. It was not very wonderful that the man found in her child-like devotion and passionate gratitude healing medicine for his wounded vanity, and some consolation for the loss of that other woman, who married John Mather, and queens it nobly at the Residency in the Hills, where she holds her little court of Anglo-Indians.

Truth to tell, she was glad to get away from London, and the Mrs. Witherbys thereof, who vexed her with stories of “The dreadful mess poor Clement Dalzell had made of his life.” But society has long since forgotten that the pretty woman who presides at the table, and who always looks so sweet and winsome, sang “patter songs” and danced at the Hilarity for her daily bread, especially since her boy is Sir Felix Yorke, and Clement is nursing his property to such advantage that he will be a rich man when he comes to his estate.

Has he ever regretted the step which parted him from that other woman? Perhaps not, but there are times when he feels that after all, although clinging affection is all very well in its way, a man with duties in life requires something stronger, and, possibly, had he to live his life over again, he would act differently. For Genevive Mather in her Indian home there are no more dreams. Her husband is her most devoted slave; but she has not yet forgiven herself for letting slip the chance of happiness which once lay in her hands, and which she threw away.

FLORENCE C. ARMSTRONG.

Into Temptation.

By A. PERRIN.

CHAPTER XXII.

HOW WILL IT END?

“Had I a thousand souls with which to love thee,
I’d throw them all delighted at thy feet.”—*T. Bowring.*

DR. HERRING reported that Andrew was certainly much better the next morning, though he would not own it himself, and insisted on staying one more day in bed, an idea which I encouraged, as I was afraid if he came out of his room I should be chained to his side the whole evening.

I hardly recognized myself that day. I felt dreadfully restless and excited, and so exercised in my mind as to how I could possibly manage to get out alone again that evening, that I made one mistake after another in a report Andrew was dictating to me, and could pay attention to nothing properly.

I had eaten no breakfast, and my hands were hot and shaky, and Andrew’s temper seemed almost unbearable, so that when I was told that Chatty Herring was waiting to see me in the drawing-room, I laid down my pen and hurried off to her with the greatest relief.

“Well, dear old thing,” she began at the top of her voice, “and how’s Mr. Boscawen? Pa says there’s nothing on earth the matter with him.”

“Oh! hush, Chatty; he’ll hear you,” I whispered, then raising my voice to the level of hers I continued, “He’s a very little better, and I’m dreadfully anxious about him.”

Chatty stared at me for a moment, and then stuffing her handkerchief into her mouth, collapsed into a chair shaking with laughter.

“Don’t be silly, Chatty,” I said in my ordinary voice; “you know when people are ill they can’t bear any one to say there’s nothing the matter with them.”

“Yes, of course,” she said, sitting up and recovering her

gravity, "but it was the way you screamed set me off. Now, look here, this is what I've come about. Do you want to give the Christmas dinner?"

"It's impossible," I replied. "Andrew wouldn't be well enough, and if he were he said he would have to be away on the twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth."

"That's all right, then, because I want ma to give it, and I think she will because Sir Gerald came over this morning and said he'd be here."

So he was not going away after all. How glad I felt.

"Well," continued Chatty rising, "I must get back and tell ma, because she'll want to make her arrangements; of course you'll come, and Mr. Boscawen too if he's well enough."

"I hope so," I said, "but I'll let you know. Do you think Mrs. Herring would call in this evening and ask my husband herself?"

"I'll tell her," said Chatty; "but you *must* come. If ma makes gruel for Mr. Boscawen you ought to come to our party. One good turn deserves another, or if you prefer it put more politely, you scratch me and I'll scratch you."

And Chatty marched off down the drive, turning back once or twice to wave her scarlet parasol and kiss her hand to me.

I breathed more freely as I re-entered the house. Probably Mrs. Herring would come round about the same time as last evening, and I should have no difficulty in slipping out and meeting Gerald. I felt I must see him again to-day, cost what it might; and a horrible reflection crossed my mind that if I was miserable at the thought of missing him for one evening, what would it be when he was gone altogether?

Five o'clock came, and no Mrs. Herring. I felt as if I was going out of my mind, and kept looking out of the window towards the shrubbery to see if I could distinguish Gerald's figure waiting for me.

"Why can't you sit still?" grumbled Andrew; "you never seem able to settle. Just now you sat down to sew and now you're jumping up again. You won't have any sense for the next ten years if you go on like this."

"Here's Mrs. Herring," I cried joyously. "Now I am going out for a few minutes; I shall never be able to sleep if I don't get some exercise."

Without waiting for permission, I ran through my dressing-room, and out towards the shrubbery, paying no heed to Andrew, who was calling me vigorously to come back. What did I care how angry he might be afterwards if I could only see Gerald for a few precious moments ?

I ran swiftly over the lumpy ground and found him waiting for me behind the bushes.

"I thought you were never coming," he said ; "I got here soon after four, but I should have stayed all night if I had thought I should see you at the end of it."

I imagined him walking up and down all through the cold night, and wondered what he saw in me to consider me worth such discomfort.

"Chatty Herring says you are staying for their Christmas dinner ?" I remarked rather awkwardly.

"I'm staying because you asked me to, not for the dinner," he answered half laughing.

"I didn't ask you to stay. And I think it's very mean of you to say such a thing."

"Josephine," he said gravely, "don't spoil the little time we have together by being cross with me. You *know* you want me to stay. Look straight into my eyes, and if you can tell me truthfully you want me to go away, I will go."

He put his hands on my shoulders, and I looked up at him and told him to go.

"Who taught you to flirt ?" he asked, without moving his hands.

"I can't flirt," I answered, looking away and growing red under his gaze.

"Well, you are trying to, at any rate. Now answer my question properly. Am I to go ? If you tell me to again, I shall do it ; I never stay where I'm not wanted."

I made no answer.

"I'm waiting," he said.

Then suddenly, without any warning, he took me in his arms and kissed me passionately.

"Now tell me," he whispered.

I burst out crying for answer. I felt as if something hard within me had suddenly melted, and I clung to him, and begged him not to leave me. I believe I even kissed his hands, but I

cannot quite remember ; I only know that Gerald told me he loved me better than his life, and that I vowed that, come what might, I would love him till I died, and that I went back to the house feeling years older than when I had left it.

How was it all to end ? Why had I met him when we could not be happy together ? And how was I to go on living with Andrew after this ? All of which questions were utterly unanswerable, as I very well knew when I asked them of myself. There was nothing to be done but to live my life out as best I could, deriving what happiness I might from the knowledge that Gerald loved me.

I expected a scene when I got back, about my having left the house so abruptly, but found Mrs. Herring still sitting with Andrew, so he was in a fairly placid humour.

"Here she is," exclaimed Mrs. Herring. "Good evening, Mrs. Boscawen. I was nearly bringing Chatty down to see you, only we knew Sir Gerald would be at the club and want a game of tennis. So I told her to go and play, because I heard that Mrs. Argles came in this morning, and of course Sir Gerald wouldn't like to find himself obliged to play with a woman like *that*—so very different to what he is accustomed to."

"I'm very glad to hear Mrs. Argles is in again," I said recklessly ; I felt I could have defied man or beast without the least trepidation.

"How can you say such silly things, Josephine ?" said Andrew ; "you know very well Mrs. Argles is not a friend of yours."

"I'm afraid I shall be obliged to ask her to dine on Christmas Day," broke in Mrs. Herring ruefully ; "I don't very well see how I can leave them out."

"Of course you must ask them, my dear Mrs. Herring," said Andrew grandly, "but I should give them to understand indirectly that you do it merely because a Christmas dinner is more of an official function out here than a gathering of friends, and you are *obliged* to have everybody. I wish I was well enough to do my duty and take the business off your hands."

"Oh, don't *think* of it," cried Mrs. Herring ; "I am really very glad of the opportunity of doing a little entertaining for my dear girl's sake. She must have some amusement, you know, and it's really a pleasure to see her in society, she has such charming

manners. I do hope when she marries, she will make a good match. I'm sure we shall give her every opportunity."

"I don't think you need have any anxiety on that score so far as we can see at present," said Andrew knowingly, who had interpreted Mrs. Herring's hints aright about Sir Gerald. And the ambitious mother bridled and smiled, and told Andrew he was much too sharp ; after which she departed to pick up Chatty in the best of spirits, which must have been considerably damped when she found Sir Gerald had not been near the club to play tennis at all.

"Do you think you will be able to go to Mrs. Herring's dinner, Andrew ?" I asked, when she had gone.

"I *think* so," he replied doubtfully ; "at any rate, I shall try. I ought to be there as the Collector of the District, so I shall make a struggle. Mrs. Herring says she will let me off dressing, and will give me slops for dinner, so that I need have no fear. She certainly is the most considerate woman I ever came across, and I hope Daintry's brother will propose to her daughter before that detestable woman, Mrs. Argles, gets a chance of making eyes at him."

A sudden fear took possession of me.

Supposing Gerald should admire Mrs. Argles ? She would be sure to put forth all her powers of fascination, and would he turn from my large figure and awkward manners to her dainty beauty and captivating ways ? I did not doubt that Gerald loved me, but I was so mistrustful of my own powers of attraction, and I had such a genuine admiration for Mrs. Argles myself, that I felt sure I should contrast unfavourably with her.

I began to suffer the tortures of jealousy in anticipation, and lay awake that night for hours, crying my eyes out with mingled happiness and misery.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE CHRISTMAS DINNER.

"Now conscience wakes despair
That slumbered, wakes the bitter memory
Of what was, what is, and what must be."—*Milton*.

THE evening of Mrs. Herring's Christmas dinner-party arrived. Andrew made up his mind at the last moment that he was well enough to go, and donned a very old thick suit, as he seemed to

have an idea that respectable clothes would be more conducive to catching cold than things that were appalling to look upon at any time, not to mention a dinner-party.

I wore my black evening dress for the first time, and came to the conclusion, when my toilet was completed, that I was looking my very best.

I had not seen Gerald since that memorable evening in the garden, for Andrew had requested me to go out driving with him for the last two afternoons, and I had no chance of leaving him for a second during the rest of the day.

I was in a great state of excitement at the prospect of meeting Gerald again, and I thought Andrew must have been almost able to hear my heart beating as we got out of the wagonette at the Herrings' door.

Everybody had arrived except Mr. and Mrs. Argles, and they entered in the middle of a loud assertion on Mrs. Herring's part, that she was certain "that woman was going to be late on purpose to try and spoil the dinner;" but though she must undoubtedly have heard every word of the remark, Mrs. Argles greeted her hostess with undisturbed serenity, and attached herself to Andrew with a charming smile on her face and mischief lurking in her eyes.

I could not hear what she was saying, but presently Andrew swung round with his back to his tormentor and began to talk to Chatty.

Two minutes after I had got into the room, Gerald made his way to my side. I had not seen him in evening dress before, and I thought he looked, if possible, handsomer than ever. The faultless cut and fit of his clothes, the white shirt, that had been washed and starched in England, making all the other shirt-fronts in the room look black beside it, his diamond studs, and the little bouquet in his button-hole, all helped to dazzle and fascinate me.

I could not help glancing at Andrew in his snuffy, dirty suit, and thinking how like a sick fowl he looked, with his shoulders humped up to his ears and an injured expression on his face as he described his illness and all its details to poor Chatty, who yawned in his face and tried to pass him on to some one else.

Then I looked up at Gerald, who was standing by my side in

all his glory, and I could have cried aloud in vexation of spirit at the hardness of my lot.

"It's ages since I saw you," he said, when the general buzz of conversation enabled him to speak to me without being overheard by Mrs. Costello, who sat in fat, serene silence by my side.

"I have not been able to go out alone since I saw you last," I said, playing with the fan in my lap, "and sometimes I wish I hadn't been able to go, then."

"So do I, when I'm not with you. But it wouldn't have made any difference; there's a fate about these things."

Just then Douglas Daintry freed himself from Mr. Cassell, who was bitterly complaining of the way Government was treating him generally, and darted over to me.

"I haven't seen you for centuries," he said. "What have you been doing with yourself?"

"I haven't been out because Andrew's been so seedy."

"Of course. And a nice time you've had, I expect. Aren't men beasts when they're ill?"

"I've had so little experience that I don't like to commit myself," I answered laughing; "but I have no doubt you are right."

Gerald had turned away when his brother appeared, and I could see him fidgeting with a book on the table, wearing anything but a pleased expression on his face. Was he angry because I talked to Douglas? Surely he could not be so absurd. Perhaps he was a little jealous—and the idea filled me with a sense of triumph and elation. I could not help talking a little more confidentially than was necessary to Douglas, just to see if my supposition was correct.

So I listened intently to a most uninteresting account of one of his dogs having been run over, while I kept a watch on Gerald's face out of the corner of my eye, when presently, to my surprise and consternation, he shut up the book he was pretending to look at, with a snap, and deliberately crossed the room to where Mrs. Argles was sitting.

After that I could listen to nothing Douglas said; all I could take in was the fact that Mrs. Argles was looking up into Gerald's face with her innocent blue eyes very wide open, and that he was apparently giving his whole attention to what she was telling him.

A big lump rose up in my throat. I hated Mrs. Argles, I thought her hideous, and common, and everything that was vulgar and detestable; and my cup of misery was full when I found myself seated at the dinner-table between Dr. Herring and Mr. Costello, while Mrs. Argles floated into the room on Gerald's arm. Andrew had, of course, taken in Mrs. Herring, and was the other end of the table, perfectly happy, with a huge bowl of soup in front of him, and a screen at his back to shield him from any possible draught.

Chatty and Douglas Daintry were keeping up a running fire of chaff and laughter; Mrs. Costello and her relations had settled silently down to enjoy the dinner they had been eating for two days before in anticipation, while poor Mr. Cassell sat the other side of Mrs. Argles, who almost turned her back on him, so engrossed was she in her endeavours to fascinate Sir Gerald.

Mr. Pierce was there, but he sat further down on my side of the table, where I could not see him; and he had not attempted to speak to me that evening.

"Are you a vegetarian?" began Mr. Costello, as I refused both turkey and ham, and roast beef with an apology for Yorkshire pudding.

"No," I replied; "are you?"

"Well," said Mr. Costello with a sigh, "I am when I'm out in camp alone; and I'm sure it's much better for one."

"Why?" I inquired, though I took no interest whatever in the subject.

"It's natural to us," he answered argumentatively; "and you always notice how different it makes one look. Why, the finest race of men in the world are vegetarians."

Mr. Costello, who measured about five feet two inches in height, and was puny in proportion, drew himself up, and applied himself vigorously to two huge slices of beef which filled his plate. He explained, as he did so, that he never put forward his theories when he dined out, as it made people uncomfortable, and disturbed their arrangements if he ate large quantities of vegetables.

So, out of consideration for Mrs. Herring, he stowed away two enormous helpings of beef and any amount of game afterwards. Poor little man. I fancied, with so many mouths to provide for, his declaring himself a vegetarian was probably making a virtue of necessity.

Conversation with Dr. Herring was perfectly hopeless. He kept jumping up and down in his chair as the servants did one thing after another that displeased him. He waved his arms, and made signs, pointing at the various dishes he wished handed round, or at anybody he imagined had been overlooked, and abused the servants in a hoarse whisper every time they passed his chair. He worked himself up into a state bordering on frenzy, and I was quite glad when we rose to leave the room that we had got so far through the evening without his bursting a blood-vessel.

Nothing would do when the gentlemen joined us in the drawing-room but that Chatty must have a dance.

"We're quite enough," she cried boisterously ; "and the drugget is beautifully tight. Now, ma, go and play your one waltz."

The tables and chairs were pushed to one side, and, delighted that Chatty's dancing should be seen and appreciated, Mrs. Herring bustled to the piano, and thumped out an old-fashioned waltz which did very well to talk to, though it could hardly have been called pretty.

I waited breathlessly to see what Gerald would do. He was still standing by Mrs. Argles when the music began, and my heart sank like a stone when I saw him put his arm round her waist and whirl her off.

"I don't wish you to dance, Josephine," said Andrew, coming up behind me. "You must be ready to come away soon, as I cannot sit up late. You will have to make the move, being the principal lady."

Luckily, Chatty overheard him.

"Oh ! Mr. Boscawen, she *must* dance," she exclaimed, pausing in the act of starting off with Douglas Daintry. "We have so few ladies, we can't spare her. Now, really, you *can't* refuse to let her dance."

"Well," said Andrew unwillingly, "I suppose I can't say no, so I'll dance with you myself, my dear, though it's years since I've done anything so foolish."

"Aren't you afraid of its knocking you up ?" I asked, though I would just as soon have danced with Andrew as any one else now Gerald had left me for Mrs. Argles.

"I can manage a turn," said Andrew, so we skipped and hopped round the room, colliding with each of the other couples in suc-

cession, till at last we paused breathless and exhausted by the door.

Andrew was quite delighted with himself.

"Dear me," he said, mopping his forehead; "I thought I'd forgotten how to dance. We got on capitally."

"Don't you think you had better go and ask Miss Costello, Andrew?" I suggested. "She's sitting all by herself, poor thing."

To my relief he went off to make himself agreeable to the lady in question, and though they did not dance they walked about arm in arm, Andrew propounding his pet theories, and Miss Costello listening in humble admiration.

I went into a little passage that led off the drawing-room and was dimly lighted by a small lantern, and sat down by myself. I was almost crying with mortification, and felt very much inclined to take advantage of my privilege as "principal lady," and break up the party at once.

However, there was just a chance that Gerald might come to me when the dance was over and explain matters, so I sat still and listened to the jingle Mrs. Herring was making on the piano, and the seuffle of the dancers' feet on the floor-cloth.

Presently somebody came hurriedly into the little passage. It was Gerald, and I felt sure he was looking for me.

"I'm here," I said quietly, from my corner. He was at my side in an instant.

"They're all changing partners, as the old person refuses to stop playing for a moment, so I came to look for you."

"Oh, don't let me keep you," I said acidly. "I'm not going to dance any more."

"What is the matter?"

"Oh, nothing."

"Josephine, you're jealous," he cried, with a triumphant little laugh, and taking my hands, he pulled me from the chair on to my feet. "Come out here."

He pushed aside a thick curtain that hung in front of an open door, and we stood by ourselves in the dark verandah.

"Have I punished you enough?" he said softly, putting his arm round me and drawing me to him; "you *know* you tried to tease me, now didn't you?"

"Gerald," I said, freeing myself, "I wish I had never met you."

"Honestly and truthfully?"

I made no answer, and he again tried to take me in his arms.

"We *can't* go on like this," I cried bitterly. "I feel so wretched. I *know* I'm doing wrong."

"No, darling, not really. You can't help it if you love me as I love you. It's not your fault, it's your misfortune. Listen, Josephine," he went on; "you must promise me something."

"What?"

"You never know what may happen in this world, and I want you to promise that if ever you are in trouble or have need of me that you'll send for me. I'll come to you wherever I am."

"What do you mean?"

"What I say. You are to send for me if you want me. Do you promise?"

"Yes," I said in a whisper.

"Very well; that's all I ask, except that you won't be silly, and try to make me jealous, because two can play at that game, can't they?"

"You played it fairly successfully to-night," I answered resentfully.

"Never mind, darling, I won't do it again. We ought to go back or we shall be missed. Won't you kiss me just once? Do it of your own accord. I won't take it from you if you'd rather not give it to me."

He waited, with his hands clasped round my waist, while I hesitated, and at that moment somebody came round the corner of the house with a lantern, lighting up the verandah, and exposing us in this attitude to the gaze of Mr. Pierce, who was walking close behind his servant, evidently on his way home.

In a second we had started apart, and he had gone swiftly by, but I knew he must have seen us, and I returned to the drawing-room in an agony of shame and terror.

What would happen if he told Andrew or any one else? And, at any rate, even if he held his tongue, what must he think of me himself?

I said good-night as quickly as possible, and got home in a miserable frame of mind. Having been found out was opening my eyes to what I was doing, and the depth of the precipice that yawned before me.

Up till now I had taken nothing into consideration but my own misfortune in being tied to a man I almost hated, and having met the man I was to love when it was too late to be happy with him. But now I began to reflect that I had lost my self-respect, that I was doing Andrew a bitter wrong, which he could never overlook if he knew of it, and that I was in truth, what Mrs. Herring had perhaps called me, "a thorough bad lot." I had been wicked and deceitful, and there was nothing too bad for me, but how could I help loving Gerald? I had never meant to do so, it had come upon me so suddenly, and surely there was a great deal of excuse for me. I had never loved any other man, or thought of such a thing, and my life was anything but a happy one. Andrew did not understand me, and gave me no chance of being happy as his wife. I had never known what it was to be cared for tenderly and lovingly, and how could I turn away from such love when it had come to me at last? I felt it was all I lived for, and I shuddered as I thought of the coming days when Gerald would have to leave me to fight my battle alone.

The thought of Mr. Pierce also worried me. I felt as if I could never look him in the face again, and, added to this, I was not at all sure that he would keep what he had seen to himself. Perhaps he would think it his duty to warn Andrew, and whatever Mr. Pierce considered his duty, he was pretty certain to carry it out. If he told Andrew I should probably be sent home to Aunt Addie with only sufficient money to keep me, and if there was a scandal, how dreadful it would be for Gerald. I remembered all Douglas had told me of his brother's horror of publicity, and I felt I would do anything to spare him annoyance, even go to Mr. Pierce, and throw myself on his mercy, making a clean breast of the whole business.

I thought, and thought, until my brain seemed to whirl, and at last, before I got to sleep that night, I had made up my mind that, cost what it might, I would beg Mr. Pierce to keep my secret the first opportunity I could get.

CHAPTER XXIV.

JUST FOR THE PRESENT.

"Then let come what may,
I shall have had my day."

To my great relief the opportunity presented itself the very next morning.

Andrew had had his tea and toast in bed after the previous night's dissipation, and while he was dressing I went out into the garden to see if there were any flowers worth picking. While I was there I caught sight of Mr. Pierce coming up the drive, and I at once jumped to the conclusion that he was coming to tell Andrew what he had accidentally discovered. Without waiting to consider I hurriedly advanced to meet him, and boldly opened fire at once. I knew if I waited for him to speak first, or if I hesitated for a moment, my courage would fail me, and I should turn tail and fly before his face.

"What have you come for?" I asked quickly, the words shaking as they passed my lips.

"I wanted to see your husband," he answered, looking over my head.

"What about?"

"About some work. I'm going back into camp to-morrow. I know what you are thinking of, Mrs. Boscawen, but I'm not going to do that."

"Oh, Mr. Pierce," I cried with a sob, "what must you think of me?"

"Poor child! I'm awfully sorry for you."

The words went straight to my heart, they rang with honest sympathy and kindness.

"Oh, I'm so wretched," I said. "Won't you help me and give me your advice? You know what you saw last night, and if I tell you all about it, perhaps you won't think me worse than I really am; you seem so good and strong-hearted."

Mr. Pierce smiled.

"I'm afraid you are mistaken," he said, in the nasty, sarcastic voice he used sometimes; "but you may trust me implicitly, and I must say that, having seen what I did last night, I think you would be right to tell me more."

We paced up and down the gravel walk, and I told him all. How my life had been cold and loveless as long as I could remember, with no one to care for me, and necessary to nobody up to the time I had met Andrew.

How I married him, tempted by the prospect of a life full of interest and comfort, with something to live for and a luxurious home of my own. Of the disappointing realization of that life when I discovered that I had married a soured, narrow-minded man with no thought save for himself, and his one aim in life that of saving money for no reason or object.

How Gerald had crossed my path just when my bitterness and discontent had been aggravated more than ever by the weeks I had spent in camp, and how I had given way to my love without a struggle so sweet had it seemed to me.

Then how I had suddenly realized that my new-born happiness was a sin even to think of, and how I was even then struggling to know what I ought to do and how I was to act.

"Yes, I understand all you tell me," said Mr. Pierce when he had heard me to the end. "You did not know what you took upon yourself when you married a man you did not love; that you had forfeited the right of ever loving any one else. The very love you craved for, you shut out of your life by your own act."

"I know now," I said bitterly.

"You won't take my advice if I give it you."

"Indeed I'll try."

"Then send that devil back to England."

"He's not——" I began indignantly.

"Now, hear me out," interrupted Mr. Pierce impatiently. "Putting aside all considerations of right and wrong, nothing but misery can come of it all round if he stays. The whole thing will probably end in the divorce court. There can only be the greatest deceit and hypocrisy on your part, and your peace of mind and self-respect are worth everything to you if you would only believe it; you are too young to throw them away so carelessly. Be a brave woman; if you do what you know is right you'll never repent it."

We turned round at that moment and saw Andrew advancing to meet us from the house. I escaped as quickly as I could to my room and sat down to think over Mr. Pierce's words. Of course I knew he was right, but it was so hard to have to send Gerald from

me ; to deliberately destroy with my own hand all that brightened my life. I knew perfectly well he could not stay on in Kuttahpore for ever, but the cold weather was not nearly over, and I might see him every day for two months more. Douglas was coming into camp with Andrew, and Gerald had intended accompanying us with the excuse of shooting and experiencing a little camp life.

At any rate I was safe with Mr. Pierce. How lucky it had been he who had come round the corner of the house and no one else. Somehow, now I was sure he would not betray me, I did not feel nearly so wicked as I had done before, and I finally decided that I would wait till I saw Gerald again before making up my mind to send him away altogether. I saw him that afternoon, for Chatty Herring drove up to fetch me for a game of tennis at their house, and of course he had been invited too.

"I had such a row with ma this morning," said Chatty as we got into their trap. "I worried her till she promised to make Mr. Boscawen let you go to the ball."

"Oh, Chatty, how did you manage it?"

"I just said I wouldn't go unless you did, and that brought her round. She's going to tackle him this evening and ask him to let you go with us."

I very much doubted whether she would succeed in obtaining his consent, but hoped for the best, and could not resist indulging in a mental vision of myself dancing with Gerald in a real ball-room to the strains of a regimental band.

I got no opportunity of speaking alone to Gerald until late in the evening, as Mrs. Herring gave him no peace, continually contriving that he and Chatty should be together, and when she could not manage this she fastened *herself* on to him, and talked incessantly of her daughter's charms and attractions.

At last Chatty reminded her mother that she had promised to go and see Mr. Boscawen.

"You know what about, ma," she said relentlessly, "and mind, you're not to come back till he's said yes."

"You are staying for the ball, are you not, Sir Gerald?" asked Mrs. Herring somewhat anxiously.

"Oh, yes," he said.

"Well, you won't see *me* at it," said Chatty decidedly, "unless Mrs. Boscawen comes too, and that's flat."

"Oh, my dear Chatty," said her mother helplessly, "you are so obstinate. I'll do my best to persuade Mr. Boscawen; I'm sure I'd do anything to please you, my love."

Where Chatty's wishes were concerned, Mrs. Herring was little short of imbecile, and she obediently trotted off to beard my husband in his den, leaving Chatty to entertain myself and Sir Gerald.

Just then Douglas Daintry rode in at the gate, holding a telegram in his hand.

"Here's a beastly sell," he said dolefully. "The collector's just sent me over this wire to tell me I'm transferred. Now I shall miss the ball. I do feel sick."

"Where's it to?" asked Gerald carelessly.

"Lucknow. That's rather a good business, but I shall have to leave in such a hurry; you see I've got to be there on the first, and I did want to go to this ball. I haven't even got joining time."

"If you're off in such a hurry," said Chatty, "won't you come and see my new pony?"

"You're an unfeeling girl," said Douglas, and they started off together for the stables, teasing and laughing at each other the whole way.

"What are you staring at?" I inquired, for Gerald had been watching me intently for the last five minutes.

"Are you sorry he's going?" he asked. How jealous he always seemed of poor Douglas.

"Yes, of course," I replied.

"Do you think you will be able to come to this ball?" he said, drawing his chair closer to mine.

"I'm very much afraid not. You see Andrew is sure to want to go into camp about the second, and he would never hear of my staying behind for it. Besides he's flatly refused to let me go at all."

"Never mind. I shall ask your husband to let me come out into camp, even though Douglas won't be with you. I could raise a tent somehow."

"Gerald, I'm sure you ought not to come."

"I know that. But I don't always do what I ought."

"Gerald, would you go away if I asked you to?"

"No, certainly not."

There ! I had asked him to go, and he had refused. What more could I do ? I could not help it if he persisted in staying, and I argued myself almost into a belief that I had done my duty in trying to send him away, and that now I was clear of blame in the matter if he stayed on.

"What are you thinking of ?" he asked.

"I was wishing you would go away altogether."

"Then you won't get your wish. I don't mean to go away. I must stay and console you for my brother's absence."

He laughed, and placed his hand lightly on mine.

"What did you think of me when you first saw me, Josephine ?"

"I don't know. I think I made up my mind that you were conceited and horrid."

"What ages ago it seems, doesn't it ? I shall never forget what a jump you gave me when I saw you ; you looked like a princess, so composed and stately."

"What did you expect ?"

"Well, to tell you the truth, I expected something of the Mrs. Argles type."

How glad I was to hear him speak of her in such a disparaging tone.

"Well ?"

"Then, when I saw you, my darling, I knew you were the only woman in the world for me. Josephine, do you know I'd give ten years of my life if I could be married to you for one."

"Oh, *don't*," I cried. "You make it so hard for me when you say these things, and I'm so wicked to listen to them."

"I suppose I ought to have held my tongue and gone away without telling you. I ought really to have started for England by last mail, my mother's been very ill."

"Oh, Gerald dear, *why* didn't you go ? How very wrong of you."

"Oh ! it's all right," he said carelessly. "They said they'd telegraph if she got worse, and as that was three weeks ago and I've had no telegram yet, there can't be much the matter."

Then we sat in a silence that meant volumes to us, with my hand clasped in his, till we heard the sound of Chatty's voice returning with Douglas from the stables.

We all started off together at her suggestion to meet Mrs.

Herring and hear the result of her interview with Andrew, and met them both in the road just outside the gate.

"Well?" began Chatty, rushing forward.

"Mr. Boscawen thinks it would be most inconvenient to stay in the station so long for the purpose of your going to the ball," said Mrs. Herring severely to me, for she held me accountable for her daughter's obstinate behaviour in the matter.

Andrew was looking very cross, and every hope of being able to go seemed to be extinguished.

"It appears to me that you are very unreasonable, Miss Chatty," he remarked. "I cannot understand why you wish to force my wife into going to this nonsense."

"I'm not going without her," said Chatty stoutly, "and if it's only the staying in the station that matters, she can come to us while you go into camp."

"Oh, yes," said Mrs. Herring, catching at this suggestion, for she had set her heart on Chatty going, having made up her mind that Sir Gerald would be sure to propose at the ball; "we should be very glad to take her in, and if you, Mr. Boscawen, are going out on the second, you could march in the direction of the railway station, so that she could join you easily afterwards."

To my amazement Andrew gave an unwilling consent, and it was all settled then and there.

"Mr. Boscawen tells me your brother is transferred," said Mrs. Herring, addressing Gerald, "so when he goes you had better come to us too, and then we can all go to the ball together. We will do our best to make you comfortable."

Mrs. Herring waited in breathless suspense for Gerald's answer. Here was an opportunity which might never occur again. Once she got him into the house to stay, the game would be practically won.

I knew all that was passing in Mrs. Herring's mind as plainly as if she had spoken the words, and her look of triumph and satisfaction when he accepted the invitation with alacrity, was beyond description.

Andrew was very cross with himself (and me too) for having been persuaded into giving his consent to my going to the ball.

"I don't like it at all," he said angrily after we had got home. "I strongly object to married women going to balls and things

of that description, and I should never have agreed only that we owe Mrs. Herring a debt of gratitude for all she has done."

"Indeed we do," I said cordially, wondering what it was she *had* done.

"It seems that that wilful spoilt girl of hers refuses to go to the ball without you, and Mrs. Herring expects Daintry to propose at it, so she's naturally anxious for her to go, and I feel I am doing her a kindness in allowing you to do so ; but please understand that it is *quite* an exception, and only because I could not refuse under the circumstances. At all events I must beg you won't dance when you get there."

This was a very trying command, but I knew so very little would be sufficient to make Andrew retract his unwilling permission altogether, that I meekly promised what he wished, and carefully avoided the subject of the ball until he had gone into camp.

I had given up all idea, for the present, of persuading Gerald to go away. With the ball in prospect the temptation was very strong to say nothing more on the subject, and I yielded to it. An extra week could not make much difference in the present state of affairs, and when the ball was over I would consider the future seriously, and force Gerald to leave me by refusing to see or speak to him if he stayed on in the station or came out into camp with us.

And so I stifled my conscience, and tried to forget Mr. Pierce's words, and gave myself up to the one week's blissful happiness in Gerald's society, which I determined should end once and for all with the ball.

In the long dull years that I should have to face, at any rate I should have one bright spot to look back upon, and at least one taste of happiness which I might live over again in my imagination.

(To be continued.)

The Little Duchess.

A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH.

By R. M. NIEDERHAUSER.

NOT alone little men but little women also are often great tyrants, as instanced by the Duchess of Maine. More domineering spirit never dwelt in a smaller body. Her eldest and tallest sister, when full grown, was just the size of a ten-year-old child. Anne Louise Bénédicte de Bourbon, born in 1676, was grand-daughter of that illustrious Prince de Condé, who fought many battles and confessed he loved his neighbour's wife as well as his own. Her father, Monsieur le Prince, *tout court*, was small, spare and sallow, with flashing eyes, remarkably clever, but peremptory, capricious and erratic. During a fortnight he would start morning after morning for Fontainebleau with his wife and invariably turn back ere he had reached the end of the street. Four dinners were constantly prepared in four different towns without its being known which of them would be eaten. In modern parlance, M. le Prince was a street angel, affable and brilliant in society, extravagantly lavish to his numerous mistresses, but bearish and proverbially parsimonious at home. His plain, crooked little princess—an angel of meekness and forbearance, but dull as such angels sometimes are—was a mere puppet, pulled hither and thither according to his whim, sad, gay, silent or talkative to order and without daring to inquire why. No sooner were his four daughters marriageable than they pined to get away. Her cousin de Conti took pity on the eldest, and the next died early of a decline, because the Duke of Maine, whom she had hailed as her liberator from paternal bondage, chose her younger sister, Anne Louise. The tiny princess lived in an age when princes were deities. Inordinately proud of being a Condé, she considered her union with the sickly, club-footed bastard—he was the second of Louis XIV.'s nine children by Madame de Montespan—little short of a *mésalliance*. But the fifteen years old Anne Louise, like her clever father, was keen and far-sighted. The

wealthy and timid duke would make a pliant husband, easily ruled. Madame de Maintenon, his fond governess, since her elevation, had steadily advanced his interests with the grand monarch. Legitimized at her instigation, then allowed to adopt the name of Bourbon, he continued to rise in favour. In the looming distance, Anne Louise pictured her august little person adorned with a queenly crown, ascending the grand marble staircase at Versailles, and seating herself with her spouse on the throne of the most Christian kings. The delicate duke, naturally retiring and studious, a regular bookworm, would fain have led a quiet life, but fate and circumstances were against him.

In spite of his partiality for this son, Louis XIV. gave a reluctant consent to his marriage. "People of his class should not marry," he replied to Madame de Maintenon's pleadings for her darling. Already the king saw the inadvisability of prolonging a bastard line; besides, the ill-shapen duke was scarcely fit for matrimony. Nevertheless, on March 18th, 1792, a grand "apartment" was held at Trianon in honour of the bridal pair, and graced by Louis XIV., who had scarcely ever appeared at these "at homes" since his union with Madame de Maintenon. The young pair were married in the chapel at Versailles at 12 a.m., and allowed to retire in peace after twelve hours of ceremonies, courtesies and compliments. Next day the newly-made duchess lay on a state bed in full gala costume and received the court. Then followed a week of uninterrupted festivities, which so fatigued the child-bride that Madame de Maintenon became seriously alarmed. So far she was delighted with the match. The duchess was pretty, fascinating, witty and, doubtless, would submit to her guidance. She was mistaken: her *protégée* meant to keep her own counsel and only follow her own inclination; court etiquette, she soon concluded, was even worse slavery than home discipline. Ill or well, sad or gay, weary or fresh, a court lady must always be to the fore in gala costume, *décolletée* and bare-headed, even travel in this apparel and expose a smiling face to dust, wind and sun. She must eat, drink, endure heat or cold at the king's pleasure, dance, sup heartily, sit up all night, always looking bright and well at the hours appointed by his majesty. Travelling was the worst of all trials; Louis XIV. delighted in filling his capacious coach with elegantly-attired women and ample provisions. Being fond of fresh air, the

windows were opened and curtains drawn at all seasons. Scarcely *en route*, every one was expected to eat, and eat all day long, no one alighting from the carriage except the king. On arrival supper was served as usual ; any lady daring to faint was irrevocably disgraced. Madame du Maine's mind was promptly made up. Regardless of etiquette, she played truant to official evenings, moral conversations at Madame de Maintenon's, excursions in the royal carriage and—worse still—neglected mass and the long sermons which, since Louis XIV.'s conversion, were the reigning fashion. She had terrified, and trained her timid husband from the very first. His meek comments on her unseemly conduct evoked such torrents of abuse from the little duchess ; she so publicly dwelt upon the great honour conferred upon him as the husband of a Condé, that he retired completely into his shell and obeyed her slightest whim in the hope of avoiding further squalls and storms. Even the king, before whom all else trembled, refrained from daunting this spirited young person, “who,” remarks Madame de Caylus, “having proved incorrigible, was allowed to go her own way.”

Nothing in her chubby, dollish face and infantile demeanour revealed the deep designing woman, whose daring intrigues and cabals kept her contemporaries on the alert. “Her temper,” declares Madame de Staal-Delaunay, her faithful maid and companion in good and evil fortune, “was capricious ; her dark and lively moods succeeding each other with incredible rapidity, and for no apparent cause. She talked fluently and to the point, but never listened. Unreasonable, like all passionate beings, she was moreover a monster of self-love and egotism. She believed in herself as in God and Descartes—blindly and implicitly.”

The little duchess on her wedding day had resolved to pursue two aims in life—her own amusement and a foremost rank, in spite of her husband's equivocal birth. The second she imagined was a mere question of time and properly directed efforts. Goaded on by her, the duke was not devoid of ambition, and would get on under the wing of his protecting genius, the puissant de Maintenon. To enjoy herself, however, seemed more difficult. Since Louis XIV. had turned virtuous, Versailles was decidedly dull, the courtiers consumed with *ennui*. Mme. du Maine might have settled at Clagny, a magnificent property, presented to her husband's mother, the Marquise de Montespan,

in sinful but merrier days. Unfortunately Clagny was at Versailles, near the king, who must be avoided. She preferred Châtenay, a modest country house near Sceaux, belonging to the duke's late tutor Malézieu, one of those wits with whom noblemen of the period surrounded themselves to supply their own intellectual deficiencies. He passed for an inexhaustible fount of learning ; his every word was law ; his verdict put an end to the hottest discussion. A man of many parts, he taught the duchess Latin, astronomy, explained Descartes, organized her incessant *fêtes*, and generally rendered himself indispensable. The Golden Age was revived, rural simplicity extolled at the expense of hollow pomp and vanity. For all that, the dinners at Châtenay were sumptuous and enlivened by pastoral music ; the evening hours beguiled by grand fireworks, superintended by the indefatigable Malézieu.

A little later the Duke of Maine, wishing to humour his exacting wife, bought the princely castle of Sceaux, built in the nobly magnificent style of the day, with vast grounds laid out in symmetrical flower gardens, groves, fountains, cascades, canals, long straight avenues stiffly and geometrically divided. Valuable paintings, sculptures and costly furniture adorned the castle, which commanded an extensive view of one of the prettiest Parisian environs.

For the nonce the duchess imagined herself a real queen and, increasing her court, proceeded in earnest to the business of making merry. The ingenious Malézieu recruited paid wits—admitted only after due examination—to sing the merits of their patroness in prose and verse. The feast of reason was perpetual, the guests' brains for ever put on the rack. They ignored the blessing of one hour's comfortable dulness. Rondeaux, triolets, virelays had to be improvised, riddles solved, piquant or sentimental letters and poetical invitations answered in the same strain, and intellectual lotteries taken part in, *nolens volens*. Such was life at Sceaux every day, all day and half the night. No wonder it was nicknamed "the galleys for wits." The duchess worked harder than any of her guests. Acting was her special hobby, and she learnt all the important rôles in vogue. A born princess and a Condé to boot was bound to excel in whatever she undertook. She underwent months of the drudgery of a provincial actress ere giving her grand representa-

tions, to which the real court was duly invited. The spectators applauded loudly, but laughed in their sleeves to see a princess before the footlights. As to the poor duke, keenly sensitive to ridicule, he fumed secretly, but dared not remonstrate, henpecked as he was to the extent of being sometimes excluded from his wife's entertainments, and sent to a turret, where he busied himself drawing plans for his gardeners. Alas! incessant toiling and slaving in pursuit of pleasure could not ward off from the duchess the terrible bugbear of the great — *ennui*; in her case aggravated by insomnia, to beguile which an ingenious abbé originated the famous "*Nuits blanches de Sceaux*." These nocturnal entertainments consisted of far-fetched, spun-out allegories, interspersed with comic scenes and songs, glorifying Mme. du Maine's transcendental graces and virtues, and representing her as Venus, Juno, Minerva and other deities. At dawn the whole castle was still on foot, and the festivities ended with a sumptuous breakfast, at which the professional wits were ordered to sparkle. The serious studies, far from being neglected, had received new impetus since the handsome and insinuating Cardinal Polignac had been adjoined to Malézieu as professor of philosophy. He spent long hours closeted with the little duchess to explain his then much admired Latin poem, "*Anti-Lucrèce*." Of course, evil tongues gossiped freely about these lessons, but, as Mme. du Maine stoutly declared, she was a Condé, and above *les convenances* and low suspicions. Nor were her political intrigues allowed to slumber. Believing her plunged in a vortex of dissipation, the duke for once dared to indulge his own tastes by translating Polignac's famous poem into French verse, and proud of this feat showed it to his better half. "You will wake one morning to find yourself a member of the Academy and M. d'Orléans regent of France," was all the praise he received from his termagant wife. She wronged him, for he worked quite as hard as she did, and more cautiously. Doing violence to his retiring disposition, he scarcely left the aged king's side, flattering, comforting, cheering him with witty anecdotes, overwhelming him with proofs of filial devotion. To Mme. du Maintenon, whose tender solicitude never wavered, he confided his hopes and plans, humbly asked her advice and guidance, thanked her modestly for every fresh token of royal favour, and showed his gratitude by redoubled zeal at matins and vespers.

By a strange fatality Louis XIV's numerous legitimate family had died prematurely one after the other, and the heir-presumptive was a great-grandchild in arms, so sickly that he was not expected to live. In 1714 the aged king proclaimed his bastard offspring—the Duke du Maine, his brother, the Count of Toulouse, and their descendants—successors to the throne. Shortly afterwards he transferred the regency from his nephew, the Duke of Orléans—purposely blackened in the public mind as having poisoned several of his royal cousins—to his favourite son, the Duke of Maine. His proud duchess was jubilant; he divided between hopes and fears. His father's words on the day the royal will was signed haunted him: "You wished this," the grand monarch had said in a loud harsh voice, "but remember that whatever power I invest you with, you are nothing after my death, and it will rest with you to obtain your claims—if *you can!*"

On August 23rd, 1715, the fast sinking king ordered his son to review the troops, to accustom them to their new master. The falsely-accused Duke d'Orléans appeared on the scene with a regiment; instantly du Maine's brilliant *cortège* left him to follow his rival. He swallowed the affront, and on the 25th obtained a codicil from his dying father, who breathed his last on September the 1st. The next day the assembled Parliament read the will, and with one blow crushed the duke's fond hopes. In the morning radiant, a king all but in name, the evening saw him utterly crestfallen, a mere schoolmaster. Will and codicil had been unanimously annulled, and d'Orléans proclaimed regent under loud cheers from the same crowd which three years previously had threatened to stone him to death. The superintendence of Louis XV.'s education was all that was left to the Duke of Maine. His wife, in a paroxysm of rage, vowed she would never trust any one again, least of all her weak spouse. Henceforth she would fight alone. If her just privileges were to be disputed by the law, she was ready to defend them by that same law. She and her court had left Sceaux for the Tuileries in order to keep the little king under her eye. Farewell to Latin poems, intellectual games and all the muses! Poets, wits and professors, including the zealous Malézieu and handsome Polignac, were turned into scribes and lawyer's clerks, and from morning till night waded through huge volumes, deciphered

obscure, illegible manuscripts, ran over endless files of papers, searching everywhere, even amongst the ancient Chaldeans, for precedents of the case in point. Mme. du Maine, buried in her bed under mountains of musty folios, took notes, drew up memoirs, combined, invented, reasoned. At night it was Mme. de Staal who took her turn at the old chronicles and modern laws. When they had argued and debated till all brains fairly reeled, a dependant had to put the little duchess to sleep by telling her stories, whilst the others were allowed a few hours' rest. As usual, the underrated husband worked in the shade. He was an adept at sowing discontent and reaping its benefits. The new regent, more intent on his own pleasures than the weal of France, gave little satisfaction, whilst the gentle, deferential, insinuating du Maine won many hearts, which daily increased his party. In vain. For once, might and right were on the same side and the famous lawsuit was lost. In July, 1717, a decree from the Council of Regency deprived the bastards of their succession right and the title of princes of the blood. A Bed of Justice, in August, 1718, reduced them to simple peers, and discharged the Duke du Maine from his tutorship to the young king. Two strokes of the pen had sufficed to rob a loved son of all the privileges showered upon him by the most absolute of monarchs. Already the old order was changing.

The terrible blow nearly distracted Mme. du Maine. On being told she must leave the Tuileries that very day, she screamed and they carried her off in a state of complete prostration, resembling a trance. Three days later she was transported to Sceaux, her fits alternating between complete silence, with fixed eyes—a statue of sorrow—and ungovernable rage, which she vented on her husband, reproaching him with his birth, his cowardice and their marriage. "The poor man," remarks St. Simon, "wept daily like a calf."

Such a defeat would have cured any other woman but the duchess. Nothing loth, she plunged headlong into Cellamare's famous conspiracy, whose object was to secure the French throne for Philip V. of Spain in case of Louis XV.'s death, and, in the meantime, to depose the debauched regent. The duchess's share was only an episode in the vast plot which later brought about a war, and she had read too many novels, played too many theatrical *rôles* to act a part in real life with the needful circum-

spection. All her movements were ostentatious and calculated to attract the attention of the police. One of her special conspirators was arrested on the road to Madrid with a bundle of compromising papers, manifestoes, plans and other day-dreams composed by her. A second, carrying still more dangerous documents, was caught at Nemours and locked up in the Bastille, where he hastened to confess all he knew and even more.

The duke and duchess were arrested simultaneously on the 29th of December, one at Sceaux, the other in Paris, and on this occasion behaved in a manner consistent with their opposite individualities. M. du Maine was leaving his chapel when a lieutenant respectfully begged him to step into a carriage. The duke obeyed, pale as death, but without sign or murmur, his hands folded and sighing all the while. He was taken to the citadel of Doullens in Picardy. His attitude on the road never varied; he groaned, said his prayers, occasionally crossed himself at the sight of a church, but volunteered no remarks, asked no questions. It was the same in prison. When questioned, he meekly protested his innocence and ignorance of his wife's cabals. When speaking of her he raised his voice, declared he had done with her and would never, never see her or even hear of her again. A few books, but neither ink nor pen, were at his disposal, unless he asked the jailor, to whom he was obliged to show what he wrote. He remained impenetrable, and compromised no one else, although he quaked with fear and expected any moment might be his last.

Madame's arrestation was quite another scene. She had just fallen asleep after a night spent in composing a memoir in her defence. She took four hours to get ready under many a violent passage of arms with M. le Duc d'Ancenis, whose painful duty it was to fulfil the law. At last he led her by the hand to her own door and pointed to two hired carriages. New outburst. What! she, a Condé, step into such a vehicle! She had to submit at last and, under the care of Lieutenant La Billarderie, was conducted to the citadel of Dijon. The journey lasted several days, during which she played the tragedy queen so effectively, that her keeper, a kind-hearted individual, and not accustomed to real princesses, melted considerably, and did his utmost to attenuate the hardships of travelling. The good-natured regent allowed the proud culprit to share her mild prison with a maid-of-honour,

a companion, doctor, an almoner and five chambermaids. She was soon removed from Dijon to Châlons, then to a country house, where she was allowed to receive visitors. This time her spirit was broken. She no longer posed as a heroine, but showed herself what she really was—an old child weeping for its toys; weeping from morning till night. The regent wished to finish the farce, but without compromising his dignity. He offered a general pardon on condition of an open confession. The little duchess had to submit. She tried to exculpate her husband—as an afterthought!—by confirming his ignorance of the conspiracy, but took care to add as the reason of her concealment, that a man so timid was capable of revealing all, from sheer fright. The Duke d'Orléans was sufficiently avenged on husband and wife, and the prison doors opened for every one.

The *faithful* Malézieu had already confessed and been released. Polignac, merely banished, got a compensation, but sulked with Sceaux to the end of his days. Madame de Staal-Delaunay refused to speak. She was in no hurry to leave the Bastille, where two lovers courted her, and she enjoyed a liberty and comfort never before experienced. The Duke du Maine took the opportunity of ridding himself of his troublesome wife, and signified to her that henceforth she might live alone on a modest pension. He ignored her power. Six months later he was back at Sceaux, and at her feet, keeping the accounts and trying to check her extravagance. Madame du Maine had made her peace with her enemy the regent by leaping into his arms and kissing him on both cheeks.

At last plots, intrigues, ambitious dreams were at an end, and the old life of innocent pleasures and intellectual games once more resumed. Malézieu's lusty songs filled the air with joyous echoes; shepherds and shepherdesses again peopled the groves and avenues at Sceaux. The duchess's new *inamorato* was less dangerous and compromising than the handsome Polignac, for he was blind and had lost the use of every limb, but possessed the advantage of making her appear young. She had better still: Voltaire, at loggerheads with the authorities, remained hidden with her for two whole months. By day he wrote "Ladig" and other tales, which he read to her at night. The nights were delightful. A second visit from the philosopher with Madame du Châtelet, "his divine Emilie," seems to have been

less successful. The lady was fussy, exacting, and remained closeted with Voltaire till 10 p.m., the one "describing noble feats, the other commenting Newton." On a third occasion there was an open quarrel, and the illustrious guests left hurriedly, but Voltaire, who never neglected useful friends, made his peace later.

The years went by, but life lost none of its zest for the little duchess. She had found time to turn religious, and took a friendly interest in her guests' spiritual welfare. One by one her friends joined the great majority. Their disappearance spoilt a pleasure party, a rehearsal, or some other festivity, but they were speedily forgotten. Why not? since they could no longer amuse their patroness. Malézieu was one of the first to go, then followed du Maine, who died of cancer, faithfully tended by his wife, but equally soon dismissed from her mind. At seventy-seven, Madame du Maine still led a gay life, still gave way to caprice and violence, very unbecoming in the whilom dainty doll, now developed into a blowsy, coarse, tallowy dwarf. As of yore she suffered from insomnia, and expected to be distracted by stories. She rouged extravagantly and spent hours before the mirror. Finding it more beneficial for her digestion to dine quietly she gorged alone, and provided the scantiest of tables for her visitors. Destouches, one of her last guests, escaped clandestinely as from a prison. She died on the 23rd January, 1753, of a catarrh, which choked her. Not a poetical death for the "nymph of Sceaux." Thus ended this strange little creature, consistent in two things only—belief in her own greatness and a love of amusement at all costs.

Sybil: A Pastoral.

By W. KEPPEL HONNYWILL.

"YOU will be true to me, Sybil?" The speaker is Hubert Dashwood, a votary of art. Ere yet starting on his seach for that rare treasure, "fame," he has discovered another, to him almost as valuable, in the person of Sybil Hamilton. On the morrow he leaves Highthorn, their mutual birthplace, bent on a tour through Italy.

They are seated alone in a little boat upon the winding river—the inhabitants of Highthorn describe it as such, although in reality it is but a stream, a small tributary of the Thames—the setting sun lights up the girl's olive face, which is turned towards Hubert, as he rests on his oars and gazes upon her with the eyes of a lover and an artist.

The picture needs no finishing touches. It is perfect. The pretty little oval face peeping out from beneath the broad-brimmed straw hat, the dark hair waving carelessly beneath, stirred by the evening breeze, the small hands toying with the white yoke-lines, and the look of dumb sorrow in her expressive eyes.

"You will be true to me, Sybil?" he says questioningly.

A solemn look passes over the upturned face as she makes answer, "For ever." Then, flushing slightly under his earnest gaze, she grasps at a water-lily lying upon the bosom of the loitering stream.

"Sybil," he says, as though only half-assured, "will you swear to be true to me?"

She moves slightly, but keeps her eyes bent upon the water rippling between her fingers.

"Do you doubt my *word*, Hubert?"

"No, little one, but I should prefer it if you would swear it."

She looks up in his face now, as she replies seriously, "If I were capable of breaking my word I should also be capable of breaking my oath."

"To please me, will you not? It will be something for me to look back upon when I am fighting my way to fame and wealth in a foreign land."

"I swear to be true to you, Hubert," she says softly.

Hubert does not break the spell of silence, which seems to him almost sacred, after the vow made by the woman he loves, in those low, sweet tones, but plying his sculls causes the boat to shoot swiftly down betwixt the rows of willows, which dip their branches in the water, bending downwards and sighing softly, seeming to echo back those words which he will treasure up with him on his journey in search for the fame which, with the sanguine temperament of youth, he feels firmly convinced that he will find ere many years have passed away.

The sun sinks below the horizon, as the boat is ably steered round a sharp bend in the stream, and slowly draws alongside a rustic landing-place.

Springing lightly out on to the wooden jetty, Hubert secures the boat, and assists his companion to alight.

"The sun has gone," he says, "our day has ended, and all will be one black night to me, until I come to you with fame and wealth, my sweet."

"Our day has ended," she repeats mechanically, as though she is saying a lesson, and then she suddenly places her hands upon his shoulders, raises herself on to the tips of her toes, and for the first time kisses him voluntarily upon the lips.

"My darling," he says passionately as he clasps her to him. "You will not be influenced by your aunt when you go to her for your promised season in town? You will not be coerced into a marriage with some wealthy eligible?" There is a tinge of scorn in his voice as he dwells upon the last word.

"Hubert!" reproachfully. "I have sworn to be true, and have not even asked you to seal the compact by pledging yourself to me, and—and—you are unjust."

"Forgive me," he pleads, as together they stroll up the gravel path between the sweet-scented rose trees. "I can hardly bear the thought of parting from my little one for so long, and I feel so sure of my own faithfulness." Then with a sudden burst of impetuosity, he grips her almost fiercely by the arm, so that she winces with the pain. "I swear to be true to you, Sybil, till death, and if love can last beyond the grave, even then."

They pass through the open French windows into the little drawing-room, where Mrs. Hamilton is reclining upon the sofa—she is a confirmed invalid—with an open letter in her hand. She greets Hubert kindly. Mrs. Dashwood and she have been friends for many years, their two only children having been brought up and studied together, no other families of their own station in life residing within four miles of Highthorn.

“Sybil, my dear, here is a letter from your Aunt Louisa, who wishes you to go and stay with her, and make your *début* in London society.”

Sybil glances at Hubert's face, which has assumed a stern expression, and answers, “Yes, mother,” wearily.

“To-morrow,” she continues, “you had better pack your trunk, as she wishes you to go to London on the following morning by the 9.40 train. Her carriage will be at the station to meet you upon your arrival.”

Hubert stands in the rapidly darkening room, tugging at his moustache as though he would pull it out by the roots.

“Perhaps you had better take Sarah with you, and I will endeavour to manage with one servant in the meantime Take all your frocks, and if your aunt deems it necessary for you to purchase any more at Nicholson's, by all means get them I do not wish you to be stinted in anything that may conduce to your being a success You ought to be, as I once was—” this with a little sigh of mingled pride and regret—“one of the beauties of the season.”

“Yes, mother,” she answers in the same weary tone.

Mrs. Hamilton does not mind conversing before Hubert Dashwood with a certain amount of freedom. Perhaps, to-night, she has an object in so doing, wishing to show him how utterly useless it will be for a penniless artist, whose future appears so obscure, to hope to win her daughter's hand. She has secured her daughter's promise not to write to him during his absence from England, and she has great faith in a London season as a panacea for heart-sickness. Besides, does he not leave Highthorn to-morrow *en route* for the Continent, probably to remain abroad for years possibly for life? Doubtless, they have said their good-byes to-night—a kiss, a sob, a helpless complaint against fate, and all is over. Doubtless, distance, and change of scene and life, will do the rest. She does not judge her daughter's

future actions by those of her own past, for *she*—and she constantly bemoans her past “folly,” as she terms it—married her late husband, impoverished Captain Hamilton, for love.

As the housemaid enters the quaintly-furnished little room, with the shaded lamp in her hand, Mrs. Hamilton notes for the first time her daughter’s white pallid face. The little mouth seems drawn, and there is a look of weariness in her blue eyes, which is not good to see in woman’s eyes.

“Child,” she says almost peevishly, “you have been out too long. The evenings are chill, and the air becomes damp directly the sun has set ; you should be more careful of your health.”

“It is cold, very cold,” whispers Sybil, in an almost inarticulate voice, as though she felt the words would freeze in her throat.

Hubert closes the window. “Good-bye, Mrs. Hamilton,” he says. “I shall be crossing the Channel this time to-morrow, and, as you know, shall not see old England again for several years.”

“*Bon voyage*, Hubert,” she says, extending her wasted hand ; “you will forgive my not rising. I wish you prosperity and happiness.”

“Thank you,” he makes answer. “I trust you will be fully recovered long ere I return Good-bye” and then he turns to leave the room. Sybil is already awaiting him in the entrance hall. He takes her in his arms and kisses her again and again.

“My poor little darling, they want to sell you like a piece of furniture to the highest bidder.”

“Hubert, I can’t bear it to have to live with that horrid old woman, Aunt Louisa, with her enamelled face and mercenary ideas it will kill me and I shall never see you again never again And I may not write to you Oh, Hubert. . . . Hubert.”

“It will not be for long, my darling. I shall be stimulated by the knowledge that when I win fame I shall win you also. Besides, *I* have not promised that I will not write to you.” He speaks hopefully, trying to cheer her. Moreover, he honestly believes that he will succeed in his efforts to make a name for himself.

“You will write?” she questions, stroking his fair head caressingly.

“Constantly”

Then their lips meet in one last long kiss they cannot trust themselves to speak It is that silent grief, so intense, so deep, which causes a choking sensation in the throat as though the breath has no outlet and the heart must burst.

Hubert pushes her from him, and striding blindly through the doorway, leaves her gazing out into the starry night with straining eyes, which striving to pierce the future see no light ahead Nothing but blackness and despair.

"Can I bear the test?" she asks herself "Can I withstand that detestable old woman's arguments? For Hubert's sake" Then she closes the door softly and returns to the drawing-room.

* * * * *

A whole decade has passed away. Life to all intents and purposes is the same as ever it was—neither better nor worse. Yet to Hubert Dashwood it seems very different. He tells himself that he is a cynic. He says that he has crushed all love, all pity and kindness, out of his heart and that ambition, pride and selfishness have usurped their place.

He is standing brush and palette in hand in his studio at Highthorn. His mother died shortly after his leaving England, and, upon his return, he chose to come down to his old home for quietude so that he might the more easily devote himself to his idol—art. He has won that fame which he has struggled through poverty and privation, and alternate hope and despair, to attain. He has made his name, has built up his fortune—and yet, although he will not acknowledge it even to himself, something is wanting. Sybil Hamilton, now Sybil L'Estrange—he grinds his teeth and a look almost satanic in its scorn passes over his face as he dwells on the name—is dead to him; cut from his life as though she had never held a place in it. Yet, wish it as he may, he cannot cut her from his memory She broke her vow whilst he was still struggling, against odds which at times seemed overwhelming, to carve his name where so many cleverer men than him had failed to chisel theirs. He has genius undoubtedly, but it is coupled with dogged perseverance, without which few artists or men of letters have succeeded in life, although fame has sometimes come—long after death. Hubert often questions whether he would have had courage to continue plodding on, fighting through every obstacle, but for the thought of the

other prize he meant to win, which, when it seemed within his grasp, he found that he had lost.

"A broken vow! Bah! What is that to a woman!" he said to himself. And from the day that he heard of the marriage of Sybil Hamilton to Arnold L'Estrange—a wealthy man—he judged all women by this biassed standard, and avoided their society as much as possible, consistently with the work he had to perform.

He is standing at his easel putting the finishing touches to his latest picture, touching it now here, now there, with a master hand. A little more crimson tipping the clouds round the golden sunset which is struggling through the willows, a deeper shadow on the water underlying the bank, a smoother touch on the dimpled chin of the girl reclining in the stern of the boat, her hands clasped together, her lips parted as though in speech, her eyes shooting forth a glance of loyalty and love. And yet, withal, a look of deceit appears to spread over her features—individually they indicate a character true and "pure as the purest star"—collectively they are false and lying. Her companion! What of him? He is leaning on his oars, bending forward eagerly to catch each word that falls from the parted lips. It is finished. The conception does not reach his standard—the idea does not seem original, but the expression upon the faces is such that Hubert Dashwood alone can give. No critic would need to peer into the corner for the signature, or to consult his catalogue for the painter's name; one glance at the expressions would be sufficient: "Ah! a Dashwood, beyond doubt!" It is his intention to send it to the Royal Academy—he has not a doubt as to its being hung The title—strikingly in accordance with the varied expressions of the woman's face—is "A Woman's Wile."

At length, he lays down his palette and brush, and steps back with inclined head for a final view. Apparently satisfied, he smiles a hard smile, almost fierce in its depth, then lighting a cigar, plunges his hands into his pockets and, striding to the window, gazes out upon the familiar landscape wherein the winding river—which he has portrayed on the canvas—peeps out between the trees in little silver streaks, at irregular intervals, as it flows murmuring on to greet, and mingle its waters with, the Thames.

He is startled out of his reverie by the door being thrown open and the servant announcing: "A lady wishes to see you, sir."

Ere Hubert has time to inquire who the lady is, a thickly-veiled woman, tall and graceful, enters. He turns and bows as to a perfect stranger.

"Hubert!" she says, raising her veil as the heavily-curtained door closes behind her "Hubert!" her voice is unchanged, sweet as ever she stretches out both her hands towards him imploringly—a gesture that he remembers well. How pretty and coquettish he used to think it in the old days that are dead and gone; only the memory still lingers, seared as with iron brands upon his heart. "Hubert!"

"Surely this cannot be Sybil?" he says to himself, almost doubting his own reason Is it Sybil? or is it but a horrible travesty of her? Surely this thin spectre, this shadowy form, is not the woman for whom he would have gladly laid down his life—aye, and sold his very soul—ten years ago?

"Hubert!" she falters, for she sees no welcome in his hard eyes.

With another courteous bend of his kingly head, which he had thrown back after the manner of one sitting in judgment upon a criminal, he pushes forward a costly chair and motions with his hand for her to sit down.

Verily time has not laid his hand so heavily upon Hubert as upon her. Her face is already lined with care, her hollow cheeks wear a hectic flush, and dark rings—which no powder can effectually hide—encircle her still brilliant, captivating eyes.

"To what, madame," he speaks almost disdainfully, "am I indebted for the pleasure of this visit?"

"You are hard, Hubert," she says.

He stands with folded arms, awaiting an explanation.

"I—you know that my husband and I are staying for a week or so at the old home."

He bends his head again slightly He *did* know only too well, but makes no answer, merely looking at her inquiringly.

"I felt that I must see you, Hubert; I have wished to see you for so long—so long."

The old love-light gleams for a moment in his eyes; the smouldering flame—which has so long lain dormant—leaps up in

his heart to the exclusion of past pain and wounded pride, but only for a moment Are the agonies of the past years, the embittered nature of a once genial and popular man, and the fierce—though perhaps false—pride of a cynic, to be broken up and cast ruthlessly aside, because she who caused them comes to him with sadness in her eyes and pleadings on her tongue—comes to him broken in heart and in body? No, a thousand times—NO. Has he not alternately cursed her and prayed that such a day might come? He sets his teeth tightly and speaks in his former impassive manner.

“Can I be of any service to Mrs. L'Estrange?”

She hardly dares raise her eyes to his: “I have come to beg your forgiveness.”

All her old high spirit has gone now. In the old days how quickly she would have resented the studied politeness and courteous words, which failed to conceal so palpable a sneer.

“Let me hear you say,” she pleads, “I forgive you, Sybil.”

“For calling? I have nothing to forgive. I am, on the contrary, honoured by madame's condescension.”

“Hubert!”—how sweetly she speaks—“You *know* for what I desire forgiveness. I—before God, it was not my doing. I was driven into it. Driven until I had no more strength for resistance. They told me that my mother could not live unless she went abroad. We were too poor to go. It was my happiness or my mother's life. And so—and so—I married for *her* sake.”

“Your husband, madame,” he interrupts, moving his arm with a foreign gesture, which he had acquired abroad, “does he know of your calling here?”

She shudders at the mention of the name. “Hubert, he is killing me! He says that he is *tired* of me!”

Hubert's face softens. *She* has not profited by her broken vow. And this man, her husband, is cruel to her! She looks so ill, so worn and weary, and she has loved *him* throughout. He is strangely moved.

“Sybil,” he says, dwelling for a moment on her name, “consider your reputation, consider the scandal there would be, were it known that you had come here secretly The world is hard, aye, and gladly would trample on a woman's fame; it would mean your social downfall. For your own sake—go back.”

"I do not care for the world, nor for the world's opinion of me," she makes answer. "I am happy now that I have seen you. I never wish to set eyes upon that man again. God help me, I *cannot* go back to him."

The temptation is strong within him; he knows that he still loves this woman, this wreck of his old love. "Why should I force her to return to this man? He does not want her and does not deserve her. He is killing her gradually In twenty-four hours we might be upon the Continent. She would be happier with me. She would regain her wonted health and spirits—and I should lose this constant gnawing pain." Thus he reasons within himself. Then pulling himself together with an effort, which costs him more than he cares or dares to estimate, asks: "Did any one beside my servant see you come here?"

"No," she says, "not any one." Then it dawns upon her why he asks. "You—you are not going to send me back to him?" she pleads.

"For your own sake—yes." And she sees no sign of relenting in his eyes. Raising her head, she espies the picture upon the easel. For a moment he thinks that she is going to faint, but she walks steadily towards the canvas and looks closely at the faces painted there. She had hoped, had thought, that his old love had not died within him. A low cry involuntarily bursts from her trembling lips; it is an exceeding bitter cry—that tells of a soul in pain. It is only another dreg in her cup of affliction. She has made her bed, she must now lie upon it, she tells herself. Hubert takes her by the hand and leads her to the door. She goes submissively as a little child. He gives her some directions as to the way she had better take across the fields, so that she may not be observed, but cuts himself short suddenly: "You remember the path as well as I do," he says half-angrily.

"I remember the way as well as you," she repeats softly. Her sweet eyes are tearless, clear as two summer stars, yet there is a look of pain in them that cuts him to the heart.

"Good-bye, little one." He presses her hand, and for one brief moment touches her gold-brown hair.

"Am I forgiven?" she asks again, feeling with a thrill of joy the caressing movement of his fingers.

He bows his handsome head and says, "God bless you, Sybil."

He dares not trust himself to kiss her. He feels almost mastered by a wild desire to clasp her in his arms, but restrains himself, knowing that—his honour, her honour, would be scattered to the four winds of heaven, and that he would never permit her to leave him, as he now commanded her to do.

Hubert stands at the window and watches her slim figure as she crosses the meadow so brilliant with buttercups and cuckoo flowers watches her till she passes beyond his sight. He thinks of her husband, and wondering what manner of man he is that can be cruel to *her*, a curse struggles to his lips, so deep, so awful, that the very mastiff shudderingly raises his glossy head from the tiger-skin rug and gazes with great blood-shot anxious eyes upon his master.

“My poor little one, you have suffered even more than I have done,” Hubert murmurs. He walks unhesitatingly towards the fireplace, selects one of the many curious daggers which are artistically arranged above the mantel, and approaching his easel savagely cuts the canvas, which he had smiled so grimly upon only an hour previously—from end to end, from corner to corner, until nothing but mangled strips remain. Turning round he perceives a dainty little glove lying upon the chair which Sybil L'Estrange had occupied. Looking at the mastiff half-shamefacedly, he presses the tiny article to his lips and reverently places it in the pocket of his velveteen coat.

* * * * *

Hubert Dashwood walks recklessly up and down the little garden path which fronts his studio, thinking over the occurrence of the afternoon. His house stands upon a wooded hill and commands a view of the late Mrs. Hamilton's residence. (For Sybil's mother died at Mentone within six months of her daughter's marriage.) Hubert strains his eyes to catch a glimpse of those chimneys now. Are they not reared above *her* head? To him they are as sacred as crowns of gold might be. But the night is dark as pitch, and he can scarcely see his own hand stretched out before him. As he impatiently puffs ring after ring of tobacco smoke from his carefully-coloured meerschaum, he wonders at the self-control he displayed when Sybil told him of her husband's cruelty. “It was for her sake, for her good name that I was firm and cast the devilish temptation away from me,” he keeps repeating to himself.

He looks across the valley once again, and espies a lurid light gleaming fitfully in the meadows beyond. "Some bonfire," he mutters, and turning round, strides up and down again. A few more turns and he is forced to stop once more. The flames are rapidly increasing in volume ; they are shooting upwards, lighting the very sky.

"My God !" he shouts hoarsely, as the truth flashes upon him, "it is a house on fire !"

Madly he dashes across the lawn, heedless of the flower beds with the peonies and tulips all in bloom, and leaps the thick-set blackthorn hedge at the bottom of the garden with the agility of a trained athlete. Across the fields he skims, spurred onward by one thought—"HER house ! HER house !" His brain reels under the strain ; it seems as though it too is on fire.

As he nears the scene of the conflagration he knows that his fears are realized ; that it is only too true. A crowd of helpless labourers stand outside the doomed building, pointing to one of the bedroom windows, some suggesting one thing, some another, all equally futile, as a means of escape.

There is no fire-engine, the nearest station being four miles distant. The house will be completely gutted ere they can arrive with their hose. The flames are issuing from all the windows ; the lead is running hissing in boiling streams from the roof ; the air is scorching.

"Is everybody saved ?" Hubert asks one of the bystanders breathlessly.

"I reckons there bean't much chance for the one as ain't," replies the man stolidly, with a wise shake of the head.

"Fool !" Hubert shouts. "Is any one in the building ?"

The man jerks his hand in the direction of the window to which they had been previously pointing. "Aye, sir, a woman," he says.

Hubert stops to hear no more ; he is already madly shouting for a ladder. The only one upon the premises has been burnt in effecting the rescue of Mr. L'Estrange and one of the servants, the former of whom is rushing wildly about, fretfully asking when the fire-escape will arrive.

Buttoning his coat close around his chin, Hubert—to the ring of a faint cheer—dashes into the hall and is lost to view in the dense and ever increasing clouds of smoke. He tries to ascend

the stairs, which are already falling, but is beaten back by the fierce tongues of flame. Feeling himself becoming stifled, he retreats scorched and blistered, and sinks upon the turf without.

"I didna expect to see thee alive agen, master," says the man to whom he had first spoken, who now comes to him with a mug of water.

Hubert drinks with the avidity of a shipwrecked mariner who has been adrift without fresh water for many days upon the ocean. Nerving himself for a fresh effort, he dashes the mug upon the earth. "Have a blanket ready," he says, and disappears from the man's view round an angle of the building. He remembers it well, every stick and stone, and makes direct for a pipe on the wall. He clutches it in his hand and attempts to shake it. It is firm as ever. It bore him as a boy, when he scaled it in quest of a bird's nest in the yellow jasmine—will it bear him now?

The flames roar and hiss, above the roar of anxious terror-stricken voices, and the roar of the winds which fan the fire.

Like a cat Hubert Dashwood climbs. but there is scarce room for his fingers between the pipe and the wall, and there is no holding for his feet. His hands are torn and bleeding—still he ascends, while an excited throng cheer him on from below.

Upwards, still upwards. only a foot more to scale. The scalding lead falls hissing upon his upturned face. he feels sick and faint, and almost lets go his hold. The little crowd of human beings hardly dares draw breath. One more foot. The blood tingles and surges once more in his veins. He nerves himself for the final effort. His teeth are tightly clenched, and his muscles draw up into hard knots, as though they would burst the skin that contains them. The flames roar and hiss continuously. Half his task is accomplished. His hand is upon the window-ledge. A ringing cheer bursts from the throats of the group of people beneath, as he disappears through the window—into the blinding smoke—but he does not heed it.

"Hubert! Hubert!" her beseeching voice of the past afternoon seems to ring again and again in his ears. He feels that she is calling for him now. "I am coming, little one," he calls aloud through the dense columns of smoke. He gropes his way

half stifled, into the bedroom beyond. His eyesight is dimmed; his faculties are deadened. He reels against the smouldering door-post.

Stay! What is that white object before him? A woman's form, with tresses of gold-brown hair falling over the pure white breast and shoulders, clad in a night-gown, lies motionless upon the floor of the chamber. The smoke has almost suffocated her. It is Sybil lying there—so ghastly white—so deadly still.

The flames roar and hiss continuously.

Hubert lifts her in his arms and walks, or rather staggers, with his burden to the window. He moves like one in a dream. He feels that his brain is whirling round and round.

"Good God!" he shouts, starting back as he gazes out into the garden with horror-stricken eyes. All the people are assembled at the back of the house, watching the window from which he entered, and not ONE is to be seen at the front—to catch the rescued and the rescuer!

"Ha! Ha! Ha!" he laughs derisively. He knows full well that he is losing his reason. "Ha! Ha! Ha! We will die together—and roast—and her husband will wait—and wait—and wait—for her cremated body—and mine. Ha! Ha! Ha! What a joke it will be!" His laugh is the laugh of a maniac. He feels, aye, knows, that he is going mad.

Then he looks at the frail, unconscious form, lying helpless in his arms, and gradually the fierce glare of madness leaves his blood-shot eyes, giving way to one of sorrow and tenderness, as by an almost superhuman effort he forces his brain to guide him.

The flames roar and hiss continuously.

His iron will has conquered his insanity.

"Back! back!" he keeps repeating to himself, as he plunges through the smoke, dodging the fallen timbers and striving to reach the room beyond him.

The little crowd beneath the window have given him up for lost. "He would have appeared at the window before this. He must have been overcome by the heat," passes from mouth to mouth.

A doctor has arrived upon the scene, but it is feared that he will be useless. He cannot raise the *dead*! The Reverend

Hallam Hughes, the vicar of Highthorn, is amongst the eager bystanders, who are almost giving way to despair; but he is keeping up their spirits by suggesting that Dashwood may be searching in the wrong room, and other plausible theories.

L'Estrange is pulling nervously at his moustache, and eagerly watching the roadway down which the fire-engine must come.

Suddenly Hubert appears at the window with his frail burden in his arms. He shouts incoherently to the group of men. They understand, and quickly have a blanket stretched out beneath the casement. Hubert leans forward and drops her gently. She is safe. but consciousness has not yet returned.

Then the men glance upwards at the window again. They see Hubert stagger—his face shows ghastly in the lurid light—he throws up both his arms, as a man will do who is fatally shot, then falls backwards out of sight—back into the burning house.

The flames roar and hiss continuously.

Horses' hoofs are clanging rhythmically, growing louder and louder as they approach. It is the fire engine; the horses, urged onwards, are dashing at galloping pace to the rescue.

Quickly the escape is placed at the window; meanwhile one of the brigade has already ascended the ladder. A few seconds later, Hubert Dashwood's burnt and mutilated body is placed by tender hands—the hands of strong men, gentle as women—upon the mattress laid out upon the blackened lawn.

Sybil has recovered. Only her gold-brown hair is singed. Her body is unhurt. But when they tell her who has rescued her, and that *he* cannot live, and she must not go and see him—will never see him alive to thank him—she wishes that they might have died together, and feels that her heart has broken.

The doctor plies Hubert with brandy, forcing it down the smoke-dried throat. The Reverend Hallam Hughes prays for his eternal salvation—all hope of life has gone. And twenty yards away a graceful woman kneels; the silver moon-beams light up the beautiful upturned face, and seem to cast a halo of glory round the shapely head, as with folded hands she prays as she has never prayed before.

"Let me go to him," she pleads. But her husband stands

betwixt her and the man who has given up his life for hers, even as he has stood between them for the past years.

"You must not see such a sickening sight," he says to her peremptorily. And so she kneels and prays—her husband cannot forbid *that*—a wild and disconnected prayer.

Gradually the patient recovers consciousness. "Is it well? Would it not be better for him to die unconscious? Am I right in bringing him back to pain?" the doctor asks himself.

The flames are becoming less and less. The brigade men are working hard, subduing them with their hose, which throws jet after jet of water over the roof.

The clergyman leans over Hubert and supports his disfigured head, whilst the doctor hastens to prepare an opiate. "You—you are very badly hurt," says the former, as the wounded man opens his eyes for the first time.

He ignores the remark, but, trying to raise himself upon his elbow, says, "She?" questioningly.

"Is safe and unharmed," answers the clergyman. "But you—are you in great pain?"

"Bah!" Hubert makes answer, waving the doctor away. "*She* is unharmed!"

Then a great sigh escapes him, and he sinks back, with a glad smile upon his face, into the clergyman's arms; and the film of death covers over his eyes, and the spirit flies away from its fleshly tenement.

The hissing ceases, the flames are subdued, the last spark of fire has gone out.

* * * * *

The daily papers faithfully record Hubert Dashwood's death—the great artist's heroic end—and the enormous loss sustained thereby in artistic circles. And ere many days have passed away another has reached the zenith of the dead man's fame.

* * * * *

It is summer. The laburnum tree in the shadiest corner of Highthorn churchyard is shedding its petals, which fall like golden tears upon the grassy mound beneath. It is Hubert's last resting-place. In his will he expressed a desire to be buried there, in "God's acre," down the narrow path of which he once had hoped to lead Sybil as his bride.

She is kneeling beside the headstone, thinking of the price which she has had to pay for her mother's brief sojourn abroad. Her blue eyes are dimmed by unshed tears ; her heart feels cold as the marble headstone—yet her thoughts are far away from the earth.

A man is leaning on the little white gate, stamping his feet restlessly. It is Arthur L'Estrange. His voice breaks harshly in upon the solemn silence, which hovers over the hallowed ground, bringing her thoughts suddenly back to the present. "Come, come," he says. "You have been long enough snivelling over the fellow's bones. I am sick of waiting."

Sybil's wan face flushes red, her little lips tremble, as a cutting retort flies to them ; but it is killed in the birth, for they meet the cold stone in one soft, silent kiss.

Then turning round she leaves all hope, all love, all happiness, all save memory behind her, and silently passes through the little white gate, and wanders up the leafy lane with her husband, into the dreary world beyond.

But the laburnum still sheds its golden tears upon Hubert Dashwood's grave.

In Town for a Week.

By C. E. H.

[From the Hon. Laura Tredennis to Lady Bodkin.]

“Hotel Métropole,
“June, 1893.

“DEAREST MOTHER,

“You will want to hear all we have been doing since we left home on Monday. It was fortunate that you telegraphed for rooms, for the hotels were all very full, though we heard yesterday that comparatively few furnished houses are let this season. Perhaps it is because of that that the hotels are so full. What a change all this bustle, commotion and noise is, after our quiet country life. It is very amusing and delightful, but I should soon grow tired of it. We spent yesterday in shopping. You would hardly recognize Jay's Mourning Warehouse, so great are the changes that have been made in it. The rooms all look twice as large, owing to the beautiful scheme of decorations, all carried out in the French style. The whole of the back is in glass, white with leaded tracery, which has a very refined effect. The walls are cream-coloured, a rather warm shade, which gives value to the black, grey, mauve and purple fabrics. Some of the most swagger costumes in London come from Jay's. We saw the Duchess of Sutherland in the Park yesterday, wearing a black chiffon bodice with sleeves all frills, the counterpart of which in heliotrope we had selected at Jay's in the morning. There is a peculiarly soft, rose-like tone of heliotrope, which is correct half-mourning wear, though often called pink, and they make a wonderful use of this in dresses, hats, bonnets and sunshades. We saw there a marvellous garden-party gown, all white silk with a satin-like sheen on it, ruches of rhododendron silk and black lace and chiffon. As they fitted both you and me so admirably with our mourning, I asked if they could possibly make us 'some coloured gowns when we leave off black, and

I fancy they really will. It is such a good thing to be well-fitted ; I would rather have a well-cut cotton than a badly-hung satin, would not you ?

“ It is quite a mistake to suppose that Jay’s is a very expensive place to buy materials. We chose a dress length of mauve crêpon and one of pale grey silk muslin, embroidered with small black satin dots, and they were very moderate in price. The Paris gowns are costly, of course, and how very tempting they are. They have an afternoon dress in white English satin, trimmed with real lace in a lovely tone of cream colour, put on as a yoke and arranged as epaulets over the tops of the sleeves, which are made full, with an insertion of lace down the outer side. The belt is in black satin with a gold buckle. The skirt, like all those we saw at Jay’s, hung quite soft and full, without any stiffening or other departure from the natural folds of a well-cut gown. The millinery is of the most tempting description ; some of the large picture hats have a grace of curve that would almost make a plain girl look handsome. I chose for you a bonnet that will, I fancy, suit you down to the ground. It is merely a triangle of jet, the front point of which will rest just above the forehead on your pretty white hair, the sides curving off slightly and then descending a little towards the ears. The trimming at the back consists of two small rosettes of white ribbon and a little plume of feathers. My own bonnet is in cream-coloured point lace, stretched on gold wires, edged with jet and trimmed with a garland of heliotrope round the edge in a delightfully becoming way. I noticed the Duchess of Devonshire wearing a bonnet of shaded pansies the other day, and as I saw one very like it at Jay’s, I thought I should like to get it for you. What do you think about it ? ”

“ We then drove to Parkins and Gotto’s about the wedding cards and the *menu* stands. Grace advised us to go there because they are sure to know the latest and most correct style of thing. The invitations to the wedding are to be lovely, all pure white with silver lettering. I am sure you will like them. The *menu* stands are really cards of hand-painted porcelain, with a different wild flower painted on each. The drawing and composition of the flowers are both excellent and will please even your fastidious eye. I chose a dressing bag for your present to the bride. All the fittings are in aluminium, which

makes the bag most delightfully light. They have the most tempting assortment of articles for presents that I ever saw in my life. There are mirrors in every kind of pretty shape, with bevelled edges and silver frames. One was heart-shaped, another oval, and a third oblong, and it was really difficult to decide which was the most beautiful. The sets of brushes and other toilet belongings made me want to have a pocket-full of money in order to indulge myself with a few presents made from myself to myself. I should have liked to buy for you a lovely notepaper case in ebony with silver mounts, the top of which draws down to protect the contents from dust. You would have fallen in love with the pretty little scrolls for *menus* that are so novel and taking, tied up with bows of coloured ribbon. The latest idea in programmes is to have the ribbon across them, instead of down. The newest colour for notepaper is pale mauve, called 'Royal.'

"We sauntered up to Peter Robinson's after completing our purchases, and found that the number of smart coats and gowns was so great and the variety so infinite that it was extremely difficult to choose, as you would have known could you have seen the beautiful things they have there in such quantities, and all in the very latest and most 'swagger' fashion. For the last year or two 'Peter's,' as it is familiarly termed, has gone in for the very best class of gowns, &c., and the consequence is that many of the very smartest women in London go there for clothes. So we were told by a friend of Eva's, who knows all the ropes in such matters. It was surprising to me to find trimmings, buttons, boas, fans, lace, flowers, ribbons, combs and other ornaments so inexpensive in this large house, which always has a dense crowd round its windows, so well are they arranged. One is devoted to materials of every kind, and with your experience of country-town window-dressing and country-town prices, you would be astonished indeed could you see this one. Silks at one shilling and sixpence the yard, dress lengths at eight shillings and sixpence, satins at three shillings and sixpence, and fancy materials for about half what we are asked for them down at home, are difficult things to tear oneself away from. Eva told me that last year she bought herself a cornflower cotton gown at Peter's, embroidered in a paler shade, made it up herself, and the cost of the whole thing was less than a sovereign. It turned out a most

successful dress, but then, you know, Eva has learned the scientific dress-cutting system, the real original one.

“Eva next took me to Garrould’s, in the Edgware Road, where they sell those pretty housekeeping aprons which we have so often seen illustrated and recommended in the ladies’ papers. Here, too, we saw endless materials for dresses, which struck us as being most remarkably cheap. French muslins printed in pretty designs, foulards and surahs, all of the latest *mode*, zephyrs in the daintiest of patterns and coolest and freshest of tints, all promised us good value for our money, and the promise was not unfulfilled. We bought some very pretty blouses and a jersey or two, as I remembered that you wanted a braided blue one and a black one to wear with your serge skirt.

“I wish we had Harrod’s stores down somewhere near us. So would you if you had been all through them, as I have this morning. There is everything you can think of to be had there, groceries, cheese, bacon, eggs, drugs, vegetables, fruit, brushes, oil, and now they have just opened a linen drapery department. The prices are all on the Stores level, and Eva told me that her mother had saved something very considerable in housekeeping since she began to go there for everything. ‘And then the things are so good,’ added Eva. ‘We get much better ideas from their price list than we used from merely prowling about among the various shops, and they have such excellent tinned things. Those were Harrod’s curried prawns that we had at breakfast this morning.’ I am sending you a price list, dear mother, in order that you may send for a lot of very tempting things by the time I get back again.

“We called at Sampson’s, 268, Oxford Street, about the new ties for Edward, and took a lesson in tying them, which I will endeavour to pass on to him when I get back. You have no idea of what charming things they have for river wear for men ; varieties without end : Kummerbunds in Indian silk and Bengal green, and ties to match. I chose a Turkish bath-towel dressing gown for Edward, as being the coolest thing of the kind for this hot weather ; and the surplice shirts which he likes so much are to be finished and sent home to him next week.

“At Harvey, Nicholls and Co.’s, Hyde Park Gate, there is a sale on, and we spent a couple of hours there and a great deal of money, so tempting were the bargains. It is a delightful shop,

because the things sold are good and in the latest fashion, as well as inexpensive. I got there the pink silk muslin that we want for reorganizing my white satin dinner gown and the jet trimming for your ruby velvet. They seem to have everything there that one can possibly want in the dress department.

"It seems absurd to think of waterproofs while the weather continues so fine, but it is good, as the proverb says, to provide against a rainy day. We heard from Ida that the Cravenettes were so excellent, being very light of weight and fashionably cut—both great desiderata in a waterproof. We were both measured for one, and I fully expect mine to be the comfort of my life in the autumn and winter. They have not the slightest macintoshy smell and are also free from the rattling stiffness that too often characterizes the waterproof. In fact, the Cravenette looks like a well-cut, well-hung and well-fitting mantle.

"Hearing that Walpole Brothers, of 89, New Bond Street, had supplied a wonderful table-cloth to the Duke of York's new *ménage*, we went in, hoping that we might see it, but it had been sent home. However, we improved the occasion by inspecting their beautiful stock of Irish hand-loom table damask, and ordering a few that I am sure you will admire, for Edward's new home. The designs are lovely.

"We turned into Boyd's, a few doors further down the street, and looked at their new safety spirit lamp, which they have patented. It is so constructed that there is no danger of over-filling it, a common source of accident, and a shield is arranged round the burner to prevent the reservoir containing the spirit from becoming hot. The patent lamp can be fitted to old lamps at a small charge. We must have one for the river. I am sending you an illustration of it, and feel certain you will order one, as you are always so nervous about our tea-making on board the boat.

"I have not forgotten about your wools. We went the very first day we were in town to Hogg's, in Goodge Street, and got your Shetland wool, 'Lady Betty,' Scotch fingering and some of the Pine wool that is so good for rheumatic people to wear. They have every kind, every colour and every shade that was ever invented, I do believe.

"Corsets are a great subject, are they not? Have you ever

heard of the 'Astoria' variety? They are the invention of Mr. John Lang, of Beak Street, Regent Street, who has studied anatomy and also the great problem of obesity and its repression. The novelty in these corsets lies in the fact that all the seams and selvedges run horizontally instead of perpendicularly, the result being that the corset retains its shape for a very much longer time than it could otherwise do. It throws the chest well forward, an important particular in the carriage, which is too much neglected by both slight and stout persons, and one on which the health depends as much as symmetry and grace. The 'Astoria' makes the best of the figure, in fact, and I fully expect to look charming when I return to you. You will scarcely know

“Your affectionate daughter,

“LAURA TREDENNIS.”

The Garden Gate.

WHERE the half-open garden-gate
Permits a vision to be seen
Of tulips in imperial state
And yellow crocuses serene,
I see, beneath the budding trees,
Kissed softly by the vernal breeze,
A maiden, pure as primroses,
Of seventeen.

Halfway across the lawn she stands,
Not coming forth nor going in,
Spring blossoms in her dainty hands,
And in her breast no harboured sin.
A vague and tender fancy gleams
In mystic hues across her dreams ;
Her candid mind is what it seems,
To joy akin.

'Twixt blushing dawn and gracious noon
She pauses in her shy retreat ;
Fair is her path, but all too soon
The woman and the girl must meet.
Ah, it were well to steal away
While lilacs bloom and reddest may,
And in the fragrant woods all day
Lie at her feet !

O that I might encompass her
With honour, like a coming queen,
And be myself the harbinger
Of joys as yet unknown, unseen !
And while the sun looked down to see,
Fain would I carol in my glee—
Sweet age ! The sweetest age to me—
Sweet seventeen !

FAYR MADOC.

"The House that Jack Built."

By DARLEY DALE,

Author of "FAIR KATHERINE," "THE VILLAGE BLACKSMITH," etc.

CHAPTER XXIV.

CONTAINS SOME JERSEY GOSSIP.

"AMY, I have heard from Mr. Selsey ; he wants me to take back my old servant, Green, who married the gardener's daughter at Oxburgh," said Jack Lockwood to his wife, about a week after Mr. Hyde's party.

It was the first time he had spoken to her except before the servants or in society since, and Amy hoped he had forgiven her, so, anxious to conciliate him she made no objection to the proposal, although it came from her bugbear, Mr. Selsey.

"By all means if you wish it," she answered.

"I can't say I wish it, but Selsey does ; he has cured the fellow, he thinks, and he wants me to take him back for three months on trial ; he will come at once," said Mr. Lockwood, speaking in a very distant tone.

"I wonder how long he is going to keep up this distant manner," thought Amy, as having made the above communication, her husband went out and left her to her own devices for the afternoon.

"He could hardly be more angry if he knew of my debts. I wish I had told him when we were in that cave. I shall never have such a golden opportunity again, and really they are worrying me to a packthread. I don't know what to do ; I can't borrow of Aunt Sophy again, and I know no one else to apply to except Felix when he is here at Christmas, if I can pull on till then ; but even then Felix can't lend me more than a few pounds, I know, so it is only staving off the evil day. I wish one of my dear aunts would die and leave me some money ; their money must come to me some day, unless they marry, and there is not much danger of that. By the way, I wonder if the Rev. Josiah

Dobson has got that letter yet ; he ought to have had it by now. That was a noble thought of mine sending it to Africa. How mad Aunt Dorcas will be when he writes and says anxiety for the souls of the negroes prevents him from coming to take her out to Africa."

Amy had just reached this point in her meditations when, to her great annoyance, Mr. Stanley Hyde, who she had reason to suspect bribed the servant to admit him, was announced. As she expected, he was full of regret at her sudden departure from his party before the dancing began, and was not at all inclined to believe her health necessitated it.

"The only compensation you can make, Mrs. Lockwood, is to come for a drive with me. It is a lovely day ; why not come now ? I'll drive you anywhere you like to name," said Mr. Hyde, drawing his chair close to the sofa Amy was sitting on and gazing rudely into her beautiful face in a manner he thought fascinating, and she considered insulting.

"Thank you, that is quite impossible ; I have to meet my husband at a friend's house in half-an-hour," said Amy, inventing an engagement and giving her visitor a broad hint to depart at the same stroke.

He declined to take the hint, and at last in desperation Amy promised to go for a drive with him that day week, trusting to Providence to interpose some obstacle before the day arrived ; for no power on earth would have induced her to go for a drive alone with Mr. Hyde. Of the two evils, she would prefer that he should tell her husband of her debts.

The week slipped by, and on the morning of the day the drive was to come off, nothing had occurred to serve as even a plausible excuse for giving it up. The weather was against her, for the day was one of those lovely balmy days one gets in Jersey in late autumn, days which cheat us into believing it is still summer.

Jack was still on stilts ; he had not forgiven her for her disobedience, and Amy now felt sure he did not intend to do so until she expressed some contrition.

All the morning she racked her brains to think of some way of avoiding this *tête-à-tête* drive with Mr. Hyde, but the only possible way that occurred to her was to get Jack to prevent it.

To feign illness, to get up another engagement, to forget it and

go out before the time, would only enrage Mr. Hyde, who in revenge would betray her secret. The only feasible scheme was to induce her husband to decline to allow her to go. She must get him to return just as she would be starting and refuse to let her go.

This would not be difficult if she were on terms with Jack, for he certainly would not let her drive with Mr. Hyde, if he knew she was going to do so. At last she arrived at the conclusion that she must make peace with her husband before the time fixed for the drive.

Jack always lunched at home now, chiefly on Gladys' account, for she and the baby were always brought to their mother immediately after luncheon, while the nurse dined. It was the half-hour in the day Jack most loved and Amy most hated; while it lasted he forgot all his cares and troubles in watching his little daughter's efforts at walking alone, and in rousing her laugh as he carried her about the room, now pick-a-back, now on his shoulders, now on all fours; there was no folly this Jack was not guilty of with his baby. This entertainment generally lasted till about half-past two, when Mr. Lockwood either rode or walked till four, when he went to the club, unless there was any large party he was obliged to go to.

Mr. Hyde was to call for Amy at three, and when the children were brought down she was still in Jack's black books. If anything, he seemed more distant than ever this afternoon, and when she made some remarks about Green, who had arrived, he answered her very shortly.

"I have only three-quarters of an hour before he comes. I must do it," said Amy, as she sat with her baby-boy lying crowing on her lap, while Jack was carrying Gladys on his shoulder to London, Paris, Guernsey, and various other distant places.

They were on their way to Paris, when it pleased little Gladys to wish to stop to say good-bye to her mother; at least this was the interpretation her proud father put upon her baby language.

"She wishes to say good-bye to you, Amy; we are off to Paris," said Jack, stooping so that Amy could kiss the child.

"Good-bye, Gladys; come back soon," said Amy, but Gladys was not satisfied; she wanted something more, something which her father understood perfectly, though it did not suit him to comply with her request.

Miss Gladys, however, had a will of her own, and finding herself for the first time in her life thwarted by her father, burst into tears, not loud, passionate cries, but a pathetic weeping Jack could not resist.

He took the sobbing child off his shoulder, and soothed its cries, and then he bent over Amy and said coldly :

"She wants you to say good-bye to me as well, Amy," and his lips touched his wife's forehead.

Now was Amy's opportunity, and lifting her head up till her lips were on a level with his as he bent over her, she whispered :

"Forgive me, Jack."

Jack was propitiated at once ; he kissed her, and kneeling down by her side, clasped her and the children in his arms, and peace was restored.

The worse half of Amy's task was accomplished now ; she had only to tell her husband of the projected drive and he would stop it whether Mr. Hyde were offended or not.

"What are you going to do, Jack, this afternoon ?" she asked when the children were taken away.

"Nothing particular. I'll go for a drive with you if you like."

"I wish you would. Mr. Stanley Hyde is going to call for me at three, and I don't want to go with him. He is a perfect nuisance, but I think Green does understand that he is not to be admitted, though I could never make Smith say 'not at home' to him."

"All right, I'll be here at three, and I'll tell Green we shall want the pony at a quarter-past."

At three o'clock punctually Mr. Stanley Hyde was shown into the drawing-room, where to his surprise and annoyance Mr. Lockwood was sitting with his wife, who, however, had on her hat and jacket as if going out.

Mr. Hyde inwardly decided to take it for granted that Amy was going with him, so after a few commonplaces he remarked as he rose :

"Now, Mrs. Lockwood, the days are so short ; if you are quite ready we may as well start."

Amy looked at her husband.

"Mrs. Lockwood is going to drive with me this afternoon," remarked Jack.

"Oh ! Mrs. Lockwood, this is really too bad of you ; you

promised me a week ago to come to-day," said Mr. Hyde, looking very much annoyed.

"I am so sorry, but Mr. Lockwood does not care for me to drive except with him. This is such a wretched little island for gossip, one cannot be too careful," said Amy in her sweetest tones.

"I should be equally careful on that point in England, or indeed anywhere," said Jack, in a very uncompromising tone.

"In that case, I can only wish you good-bye; but I must say I think you have treated me very shabbily," said Mr. Hyde, who, calm outwardly, was inwardly vowing vengeance on Jack for thus baulking him of his afternoon's pleasure.

He was not a man to offend lightly; though few people cared to count him a friend, still fewer would choose him as a foe. His was a cruel nature, which would stop at nothing to gratify his desire for revenge. As he drove away from the Lockwoods' that November afternoon, frowning and gnawing his under-lip in suppressed anger, there was an expression in his eyes which boded no good to Jack or Amy.

"I'll be even with them yet," he muttered with an evil smile, more dangerous than a frown.

But while he was meditating vengeance, his victims were nearer to happiness than they had yet been, though Amy's peace was clouded by the shadow of her debts. A change was coming over Amy; it seemed as if she were about to develop into a jealous wife now she was in love with her husband. She had grown to care whether he smiled or frowned upon her; she would have been furiously jealous had he flirted with any one else; she would have given a great deal to know for a fact that he had forgotten Joy. She wished he and Joy could meet in her presence, that she might satisfy herself Joy was no longer anything to him.

How she wished Joy would marry! Why didn't the silly little thing take Major Graham? The poor man was desperately in love with her, and she would make an excellent step-mother to his children. Perhaps she would take him. Major Graham was then in England; perhaps he would come back engaged to Joy.

"If he does I shall get Felix to have us asked to Roxburgh for our leave in January," thought Mrs. Lockwood one day when Jack mentioned that he had heard from Graham.

"By-the-way, Amy, I thought that missionary your aunts know was in Africa," said Jack on the day Mr. Dobson reached Jersey.

"So he is, or so he was—why?" said Amy, her thoughts flying to the letter she had written to that gentleman in Miss Dorcas's name.

"Because I met him driving away from the pier as I came home from the Fort; he was evidently going out to Saumarez."

"Nonsense! you don't mean it, Jack," exclaimed Amy, her colour rising with delight mingled with fear at the success of her trick.

"Yes, I do; I didn't think it would interest you so much, though," replied Lockwood.

"Oh, but it does; he was in Africa, so he must have come on Aunt Dorcas's account, I suppose. That is why I am interested," said Amy, who dared not tell Jack of the trick she had played on the missionary.

She longed to know if it were her letter which had brought him so far; still more did she long to know what Miss Dorcas would say and do if it were; and she would have given her quarter's allowance, badly as she needed it, to witness the scene recorded in the last chapter.

She dared not drive out to Saumarez to see what was going on, lest they should suspect she had had a finger in the pie they were baking; but the next day she sent Green over with a note to ask Miss Keppel to come and spend the afternoon with her.

Green brought back a verbal message that Miss Keppel would come if possible, and would Mrs. Lockwood excuse a letter? He supplemented this message by expressing his opinion that there was something amiss in the house.

"What makes you think so, Green?" said Amy, her curiosity intensely excited.

"Well, ma'am, the servants rushed to the door when I rang, and seemed disappointed to see me, and I heard a crying as if somebody was in hysterics, and I heard Miss Keppel say she could not write to you, her head felt as if it would burst with so much worry, so I put two and two together."

"Did you see Miss Dorcas, the tall one with short hair? She is always in the garden in the morning," said Amy.

"No, ma'am ; I saw no one but two scared servants and some dogs, and the dogs were howling like mad, and that is a bad sign," said Green.

Mrs. Lockwood's curiosity was highly excited by this report ; what could have happened ? Green was right ; there was evidently something amiss ; it was an unheard of thing not to find Miss Dorcas in the garden at that hour of the morning.

Mrs. Lockwood racked her brains to guess what had occurred, but that which really had happened never entered her head. All that afternoon she stayed in the house in the hope of Miss Keppel calling, but that lady did not appear ; and she had to wait till Jack came home from the club before her curiosity was gratified.

"If anything has happened, they are sure to hear it at the club," thought Amy.

This was true, for men are really much greater gossips than women ; and the moment Jack came in Amy saw by his face he had something to tell her.

"Is there any news at the club ?"

"Yes, some that will both surprise and interest you. Your aunt Dorcas has eloped !"

"What ! Aunt Dorcas ! You must be mad, Jack !"

"No, I am not mad ; she is, perhaps ; but it is quite true. Graham is my authority ; he saw them at Guernsey this morning ; he was coming back and the two boats met, and he saw Mr. Dobson and Miss Dorcas go ashore."

"I can't believe it yet ; surely Major Graham made a mistake."

"Oh, no, he didn't ; it was known at the club that Dobson arrived yesterday, and that Miss Dorcas has been missing all to-day ; besides, we have had confirmation of it, which will appear in the paper to-night."

"Confirmation of what ?" said Amy.

"Of the marriage !"

"The marriage ! Do you mean to say they are married ?" exclaimed Amy, looking rather crestfallen, for she by no means wished any of her aunts to marry and leave their money away from her.

"Yes, they were married in Guernsey as soon as they arrived."

"How do you know ?"

"We sent a confidential messenger to the paper office to ask

if any marriage notice had been telegraphed from Guernsey, and the reply was a copy of the advertisement which will appear this evening of the marriage of the Rev. Josiah Dobson and Miss Dorcas Keppel."

"How like you men! The idea of your sending to the newspaper office! And then you say we women are gossips! What do you call that, I should like to know?" said Amy.

"Intelligent inquiry," replied Jack.

"Well, I am amazed. Aunt Dorcas married, and a runaway marriage, too, at her time of life; the old sinner," said Amy.

"I expect she did that to avoid the fuss of a wedding. I suppose she made up her mind at last to marry the man, and thought if 'twere done, when 'tis done, then 'twere well 'twere done quickly. I expect you'll have your aunt Sophy here full of it to-morrow," said Jack.

"I shan't wait for that; I shall drive over to Saumarez to see her the first thing after breakfast."

All that evening Jack Lockwood was very thoughtful and grave; he did not read, nor was he inclined to talk, but he sat staring at the fire the greater part of the evening; and Amy, who had acquired the art of reading his thoughts to a certain extent, knew he was thinking of Joy.

"He always has that melancholy look when he is thinking of her, the horrid creature," thought his wife.

"Amy, I told you Graham is back, didn't I?" said Jack, at last rousing himself from his reverie.

"Yes, to be sure you did," replied Amy.

"He is very happy; he is engaged to your cousin, Joy Oxburgh," said Jack, and in spite of himself his voice trembled as he said Joy's name.

CHAPTER XXV.

HOW MISS KEPPEL AND MISS LYDIA BORE THE NEWS.

It was all quite true.

Miss Dorcas had eloped with her missionary, and was married in Guernsey by special licence, as Mr. Lockwood had learnt at his club.

Soon after Miss Dorcas had given herself and her liberty to Mr. Dobson, she descried the puppy, which she had forgotten,

lying under the sofa, busily and happily occupied in unravelling a bundle of Miss Lydia's embroidery silks, which she used for her church work.

"Oh, dear! oh, dear, Lion! Now there will be another row. Lock the door till I have caught him, Josiah. If Lydia comes in, she'll want me to whip the dog again," exclaimed Miss Dorcas, as, after an exciting chase, she caught the dog and rescued the silks, which were spoilt.

"They are utterly spoilt. I must go to town and buy some more," said Miss Dorcas.

"I'll walk with you. Shall we tell Miss Keppel of our happiness first, Dorcas?"

"Oh, no; I can never tell Sophia. I shall never face her or any one. I wish we could go to church one day and be married, and say nothing to any one until it was done," said Miss Dorcas.

"Well, why should not we do so? No one knows I am here. I walked in and I will walk out again and meet you in the lane, and we will make our plans as we walk into town," said Mr. Dobson.

Miss Dorcas agreed to this out of sheer shyness, and during the walk she was persuaded to go to Guernsey and be married the next morning, for, as Mr. Dobson urged with truth, he had waited long enough for his bride; there was no need to add a lengthy engagement to the time he had already served for his Rachel.

It was not surprising under the circumstances that Miss Dorcas should have forgotten all about Miss Lydia's silks; but, as luck would have it, that little lady was too much absorbed in her novel all the evening to find out the puppy's last delinquency. Indeed, she only looked up from her book two or three times to remonstrate with her sister Dorcas for fidgeting.

"Lydia is right, Dorcas; you have not been quiet for five consecutive minutes the whole evening," said Miss Keppel, looking up from her book of travels.

Miss Keppel posed as a superior woman. Therefore she did not read novels, but affected books of travel, history and biography, occasionally falling asleep over them in the long winter evenings.

They were very different, these three maiden ladies, different in every way; and as they sat together for the last time, any

stranger peeping in at them would scarcely have taken them for sisters.

Miss Keppel, in her dinner dress of rich black velvet, her white hair looking still whiter by contrast with the long black lace veil she always wore, and which set off to the best advantage her handsome features and well-preserved complexion, had a matronly appearance, and no one would have taken her for an old maid.

Miss Dorcas, in her plain black silk dress, donned every evening by Miss Keppel's orders, with her short grisly hair, her homely features, her masculine air and her abrupt manners, was the very antipodes of Miss Keppel.

Miss Lydia, again, was unlike either of her sisters ; very small, very fair, very young in dress and manner ; she affected coloured ribbons and dresses open at the neck and with short sleeves, in the evening ; she still blushed and giggled on any and every occasion, and having been a coquette in her youth, was *dévoté* in her maturity.

These ladies, when at home, always spent their evenings in the same way. After dinner, which was finished by half-past eight, Miss Keppel nodded over her history, Miss Dorcas read the newspaper and Miss Lydia a novel till a quarter to ten, when the servants came in to prayers ; after which Miss Dorcas pecked at her sisters' cheeks and went up to bed, having first gone the round of the house to see that the doors and windows were all bolted and barred ; and Miss Keppel and Miss Lydia sat up and played backgammon for an hour.

This evening Miss Dorcas did not seem in her usual hurry to go to bed ; she dawdled about, and when at length she said good-night, she gave each of her sisters an extra kiss, and if such a thing had been at all likely, Miss Keppel would have declared there were tears in her eyes as she left the room.

The boat leaves Jersey at a quarter to seven every morning, and it was nearly three-quarters of an hour's drive to the pier ; so at six the next morning Miss Dorcas crept downstairs in the grey dawn, and, letting herself out of the house as quietly as possible, walked down the drive with a small portmanteau in her hand. At the gate stood a fly, out of which Mr. Dobson sprang to welcome her and help her in, and the next minute they were on their way to the pier.

She was not missed until breakfast time, and then Miss Keppel only thought she was in the garden. However, when Miss Lydia returned from "matins," and Miss Dorcas still did not appear, a servant was sent to look for her.

"Miss Dorcas is gone out, ma'am. Her hat and jacket are not in her room, and cook says she thinks she went out very early, for the hall door was undone when she came down at half-past six this morning," said the maid.

Miss Keppel was surprised, but not alarmed. She did not believe the cook was down before half-past seven; and if any of the animals were ailing, it was quite possible Miss Dorcas had gone to the veterinary's about it.

However, after breakfast, Miss Dorcas not returning, she sent for the gardener to make inquiries. He had not seen Miss Dorcas, and as he reported that the animals were all well, Miss Keppel now began to feel alarmed.

She went upstairs to search her sister's room, and had just discovered that Miss Dorcas had taken a portmanteau and a change of dress with her, when a hue and cry from Miss Lydia and a howl from the puppy called her downstairs.

"Oh, Sophy, where is Dorcas? This wretched puppy has spoilt my embroidery silks. It is too bad. I have whipped the brute, but I can't hurt it. Where is Dorcas?" and Miss Lydia looked inclined to cry.

"Lydia, Dorcas is gone," said Miss Keppel solemnly. She looked very pale and very grave as she spoke.

"Gone!" exclaimed Miss Lydia.

"Yes, eloped," said Miss Keppel.

At this dreadful word Miss Lydia gave a little shriek of horror.

"Eloped! Where to?" she cried.

"I don't know. I am afraid something very serious has happened," said Miss Keppel; whereupon Miss Lydia, by way of doing something helpful, went into violent hysterics.

She laughed and cried, and sighed and sobbed, and gave Miss Keppel something to do in attending to her, which was perhaps a good thing, for the poor lady was at her wits' ends to know what to do about Miss Dorcas.

It was a delicate matter to make inquiries about, she thought, and if only Lydia had shown more self-control she would have pretended to the servants that she knew what had become of her sister.

About ten o'clock, however, her suspense and anxiety were changed into certain knowledge by the arrival of a telegram from Guernsey, signed "Dorcas Dobson;" it was as follows:

"We were married this morning here. It will be in this evening's paper. We leave for England at the end of the week. We will write to-day."

A bomb-shell thrown into Saumarez Cottage could not have caused more consternation than did this message.

Miss Keppel was as shocked as she was surprised to think one of her "girls" had actually eloped! Why, the fastest of Jersey girls could hardly have done worse! What a scandal it would create!

If it had been Lydia, she would still have been shocked; but Lydia was always flighty, so she would not have been so much surprised.

But that Dorcas, the sober Dorcas, the man-hater, the staid, the proper, the sensible Dorcas, her favourite sister, that she should have dealt her such a blow; this was too much for Miss Keppel, and, shutting herself in the library, she gave way to a fit of tears, and left the wondering maids to recover Miss Lydia from the second attack of hysterics into which the telegram threw her.

It was about this time that Green arrived, but Miss Keppel felt she could see no one that day, hence her message to Mrs. Lockwood. That evening the whole island would know of the scandal Dorcas had created; and as she guessed, Mrs. Lockwood would come down the next day to hear particulars.

Miss Keppel spent the whole of the day in solemn seclusion, occupying most of her time in writing to Mrs. Dobson. Miss Lydia having been in hysterics in the morning, went to confession to the rector in the afternoon, a proceeding which for once roused Miss Keppel's indignation.

"What nonsense, Lydia. What had you to confess, I should like to know? It is not your fault that Dorcas has eloped."

"I may have sinned in thought, if not in deed, as much as Dorcas, Sophia," remonstrated Miss Lydia humbly.

"The wish was father to the thought, no doubt," said Miss Keppel, which was severe of her, but, poor thing, she was very much troubled and annoyed.

"I did not want it known at the Rectory until this evening, when they will see it in the paper," she continued.

"No one will know it, Sophy dear ; it was told under the seal of confession," said Miss Lydia cheerfully.

"Be quiet, Lydia, do. I am too angry to listen to such absurdities with equanimity to-day. And for the future I must beg you not to leave the house again without my permission."

This prohibition, far from annoying Miss Lydia, rather pleased her ; it made her feel quite young again, and she half made up her mind to order a white dress for evening wear on the strength of it.

Dorcas had eloped. Why should not she, who was several years younger, do the same ?

Sophy was quite wise to be careful, and when Amy called the next day Miss Lydia was not at all offended at receiving a hint to leave her married niece alone with Miss Keppel.

Mrs. Lockwood was by no means pleased at the success of the trick she had played on her aunt Dorcas ; the biter was bit, for it was to her advantage that her aunts should remain single and go over to the majority as quickly as possible, leaving her their money.

Now not a penny of Miss Dorcas's money would she ever get. She would leave it to her husband if he survived her and to some of his poor relations if he did not.

Besides this the scandal Miss Dorcas's elopement would cause was a serious annoyance to Mrs. Lockwood ; she set up for being such a pattern wife, and was so careful to avoid giving scandal herself, that for one of her aunts to be the talk of the island for nine days was very annoying to her.

"How horrid of Aunt Dorcas, Aunt Sophy. Why, the man was in Africa : she must have been meditating this for a long time, for he would never have come so far unless she had told him she would marry him," said Mrs. Lockwood.

"I know no particulars till the mail comes in ; it is so provokingly late to-day."

"It always is when one particularly wants one's letters," said Amy, thinking she had better leave before the post arrived, lest, if Mrs. Dobson mentioned the forged letter, her aunt Sophy should suspect her of being the author of it.

In spite of her annoyance she was proud of the success of her joke and longed to share it with some one ; if only Jack Jimpson had been in Jersey how he would have enjoyed it.

"I really must tell Jack," thought Amy, meaning her husband, as she drove home, and so she did one evening a few days later after dinner.

"Do you remember my telling you I would pay Aunt Dorcas out for letting me in for that prayer meeting, Jack?" she asked as Jack picked some walnuts for her.

"Yes, quite well."

"I have had my revenge, and a very kind revenge it was, too; Aunt Dorcas may thank me she is married."

"What do you mean?"

"Why, I wrote to Mr. Dobson in Aunt Dorcas's name and writing and said if he would come for her she would marry him; he took the bait, came, and I suppose forced her to keep the promise she never made."

"You did, Amy? Well, certainly that is one of the best jokes I ever heard. I should not be surprised to hear Miss Dorcas guessed who the culprit was and married to spite you; she is quite capable of it," said Jack.

"Quite; I daresay she did so," said Amy.

"How did you manage to imitate her writing so well?" asked Jack.

"Oh, easily enough. I can imitate any writing perfectly; it is one of my many accomplishments," said Amy lightly, as her husband crossed the room with a plate of walnuts for her.

He was always very attentive in all such little matters; but since they had heard of Joy's engagement his manner to his wife had been tenderer than before; before it had been perfectly courteous, often kind, sometimes almost affectionate, but the last few days it had been more: there was a deprecating attitude about him which seemed to say he was conscious of past coldness, and wished in a measure to atone for it.

This at least was the interpretation Amy put on his manner, and it was correct; she had watched him narrowly since he had told her of Joy's engagement, and she was convinced it was a relief to him, and so perhaps it was, for it made the assurance that Joy could never be his doubly sure.

A slight frown crossed his handsome features as Amy made the above remark, and he answered gravely:

"It is not an accomplishment I should cultivate if I were you."

"Don't look so solemn about it ; I am not going to be guilty of forgery," laughed Amy.

"God forbid !" exclaimed Jack.

"Unlikely things do happen, don't they ? Just fancy that prim old Aunt Dorcas actually eloping. I wish we could go away till the nine days' wonder it will create has subsided," said Amy.

"I can't go till January ; my leave begins in the second week. Have you thought where we are to go besides to your people and mine ?"

"I should like to go to Oxburgh for a fortnight ; I have not been since we married. What do you say ?" asked Amy, who was not a little anxious as to Jack's answer.

"I have no objection," said Jack gravely.

"Then he has got over his fancy for Joy. I must get Felix to have us invited ; I really wish to go," thought Amy, and there the matter for the present ended.

CHAPTER XXVI.

IN THE GOLDEN LIGHT.

"WHAT is Major Graham doing up at the Hall again this year, Perriam ?" inquired the gardener's wife one October evening.

"I can't say, wife," said Perriam, who was reading.

"Of course you can't say. You never can say anything I want to hear."

"I can't say because I don't know."

"Don't know, indeed ! A likely tale that is. You have no opportunity for knowing, have you ? You aren't about the gardens and houses all day ; you never see what goes on up there, do you ? You never hear the servants talking ! Servants never do talk about their master's affairs, do they ? I might have known you could not know anything about the major, nor about Miss Joy neither, I suppose," said Mrs. Perriam with fine sarcasm.

"I know he follows her about everywhere," said Perriam.

"Oh, come ! You do know something after all, then ; maybe if I wait patiently I may hear a little more."

"If you wait patiently you may hear a great deal," said Perriam with a smile.

"Which, I suppose, means you think I can't wait patiently.

Oh ! Perriam, I wonder you ain't ashamed of yourself. But men never are ashamed : we would never have had clothes to wear if it had not been for Eve ; it was she thought of those aprons, I'll be bound. I didn't wait patiently on you when you were ill, I suppose ? I have not waited patiently this two years come January to know where Rose is ? Nobody never did wait patiently—not even David, though he says so in his psalms—if I have not, and then to fling it in my face : if I wait patiently ! ”

“ If you do, you may hear what Major Graham got by waiting patiently,” said Perriam.

“ I thought you did not know what he was doing. Seems to me you know a good deal ; but you always were so close, Perriam. You were born close, and close you'll be to the end of the chapter, I suppose, so it is no use talking about it,” said Mrs. Perriam.

Nevertheless, although she arrived at this philosophical conclusion, she continued to talk about it for the remainder of the evening.

Major Graham had been at Oxburgh a week when this conversation took place, and although up to that point he had not formally renewed his proposal to Joy, both the squire and Mrs. Oxburgh, who were eager for the match, gave him great hope that this time he would meet with a favourable answer.

One evening, the sportsmen being late in returning from pheasant shooting and Mrs. Oxburgh being anxious, as she always was when there was a shooting party, till they returned, Joy took The Captain and walked down to the far lodge to see if she could meet them.

It had been a lovely October day, and the sunset, Joy thought, was going to be as an October sunset often is, a grand one. Already the western sky was glowing with golden tints, against which background rich purple clouds of fantastic shapes stood out in bold relief. The sinking sun shed a golden light on the world it was leaving ; the parkland gleamed golden beneath its slanting rays, the elms already crowned with gold caught the golden light, the waters of the lake reflected it, all nature seemed bathed in this rich, soft, warm tint, and as nature's moods are very infectious, Joy, who was susceptible to all such influences, caught the tone and felt her heart glow, and her soul too seemed flooded in golden light.

At the far lodge she met the shooting party, and while the squire and a friend hurried on to relieve Mrs. Oxburgh's anxiety, Joy followed more slowly with Major Graham.

They talked first of the day's sport, and then of the sunset, which seemed to depress Major Graham, for he sighed as he gazed at the golden sky now flecked with rosy clouds.

"Isn't it beautiful?" said Joy.

"Very, almost too beautiful," he answered.

"Does it make you sad?" said Joy, but without waiting for an answer she went on: "Beauty never makes me sad; I could shout for joy when I see a beautiful view or building or sunset, and yet I have heard of people who burst into tears at the sight of the Duomo at Florence or the Coliseum."

"They may be tears of joy, though I confess I feel sad when I see a fine sunset or a grand view; with me it is a selfish sadness: I think it is a craving for sympathy; I long for some one to share the pleasure it gives me with me."

"Well, I am sharing the sunset with you, so you ought not to feel sad this evening," said Joy.

It was not a wise speech, since she did not wish him to take advantage of it, and she thought so a moment later.

"I should never feel sad again if I had you always with me to share my joys and sorrows. Joy, I want you so very much; let me speak once more; will you come to me? I will wait if you will only promise to be my wife some day. Will you, Joy?"

He had given his gun to his servant when they met, so he had nothing in his hands but Joy's dog-whip, and as he spoke he caught hold of one of Joy's hands, and felt it tremble as it lay unresisting in his.

"Major Graham, do you know about me and—and Jack?" asked Joy shyly, turning crimson.

"I know there was something between you, but I don't know what."

"We loved each other, and Amy came between us and deceived him; and I can never love any one else in that way," said Joy.

"Love me in another way, then; I will be satisfied. Joy, if you only loved me as you love that dog, I should be the happiest man on earth."

They were standing still now in the golden light; he had

seized both her hands, and was looking down at her, so eagerly that Joy's eyes fell, and he went on :

"Joy, we do not love twice in the same way. I have, as you know, loved before, but my love for you is none the less for that."

"I don't know what to say," said Joy, feeling she must say something.

"Say, yes," whispered the major.

"I am very young, and I suppose I shall forget the past ; if he were dead I—I think I should say yes," said Joy, speaking slowly, and more as if she were thinking aloud than speaking to him.

"He is dead to you," said Major Graham gently, but there was a note of rebuke in his voice which Joy was quick to perceive.

To his surprise and distress she burst into tears, and the sobs came fast and deep.

"What have I said ? brute that I am. Joy, my darling, for God's sake, don't cry so. What is it, my love ? Don't, Joy, don't," and before Joy realized what was happening, she was in his arms, sobbing on his breast, as he kissed the tears from her face.

Presently she made an effort to get away, but he held her tighter.

"Not yet, Joy. Promise me first you will marry me some day. I will not hurry you ; I will wait till you have quite forgotten," he whispered.

"Then I will try to forget," answered Joy.

"And some day, a long time off, perhaps, you will be my wife ?" he pleaded.

"Yes," said Joy, and after that, till they got home just in time to dress for dinner. the conversation was not worth recording.

There were traces of tears on Joy's fresh young face when she appeared at dinner, and the squire noticing it and wondering at the cause said :

"Joy, you look like a rose which has been washed in a shower."

"I have just gathered the rose, Mr. Oxburgh, and it has not a thorn," said Major Graham, leading Joy proudly to the squire ; and after this there were great rejoicings that evening.

Mr. and Mrs. Oxburgh were delighted ; they liked Major Graham exceedingly, and they were both of opinion that Joy would be much happier married to him than living single for Jack Lockwood's sake.

The news reached the Selseys the next day just as they were going to dinner, and, as Frances foresaw, Felix came in later to discuss it, he having also heard of the engagement from his mother.

"Graham appears in a seventh heaven," said Felix.

"No wonder, lucky fellow. He has damped all my hopes. I always told Joy she was to be my second wife, if only the Deceased Wife's Sister Bill were passed in time," said Mr. Selsey, who was really a strong opponent of that measure.

"Don't talk such nonsense, Tom ; it is very unclerical, too," said Frances, who seemed out of spirits and not altogether pleased at the news. "I hope she will be happy," she added, in a tone which implied she feared she would not.

"Happy ! Why shouldn't she be happy ?" exclaimed Mr. Selsey.

"Because I don't think she has got over her liking for Jack Lockwood yet," said Frances.

"How like you women. You are all so romantic and so unpractical. I believe you would like Joy to be an old maid, because she once had a liking for young Lockwood," said Mr. Selsey.

"No, I should not ; but I don't wish her to marry Major Graham unless she loves him. Marriage is too sacred to be entered into lightly, and a marriage without love is in my opinion a purgatory," said Frances.

"What do you think, Felix ?"

"I agree with Frances. I think unless Joy loves Major Graham she had better remain single. Marriage is not the goal of existence, as people seem to think. It is a means to an end, it is not the end itself ; the end is holiness, and if people can attain that end better in the married state, let them marry ; if not, let them remain single," said Felix.

"High doctrine, Felix ; but I believe you are right, although when I married Frances I fear I thought more of my own happiness than of holiness," said Mr. Selsey.

"I disapprove of long engagements as a rule, but I am glad Joy is not to be married for some time to come ; she is quite young still," said Frances, and then the conversation turned on Felix's work.

He was a qualified surgeon now, and working hard among the

poor, generally making a nominal charge for his services, lest, as Mr. Selsey said, he should pauperize the people he attended.

"Do you think Felix will ever marry?" said Mr. Selsey to his wife that night after Felix had gone.

"I think not. I wish he would."

"It would surprise me very much if he did. I can't fancy him doing anything so usual; he is far more likely to become a hermit or a monk. Felix is a man born out of due time; he ought to have lived in the middle ages instead of in the nineteenth century; we are far too practical nowadays for men of his genius; he is wasted on us, we can't appreciate him."

"I sometimes think he liked Amy," said Frances.

"Amy! She is not fit to fasten his shoe-strings. I only know one woman on earth good enough for Felix, and she happens to be his sister and my wife, both inseparable objections."

"Your wife is tired of such flattery, and is going to bed," said Frances, smiling as she rose, and folding up her work went upstairs.

(To be continued.)

LONDON SOCIETY.

SEPTEMBER, 1893.

A Third Person.

By B. M. CROKER,

Author of "PROPER PRIDE," "DIANA BARRINGTON," "TWO MASTERS,"
"INTERFERENCE," "A FAMILY LIKENESS," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXIII.

MRS. GREY, OF JHANSI.

THERE was a piercing arrow in that innocent speech of Rose Yaldwin's: "Be as angry as you please with him on your own account."

No need to recommend this course to Mrs. Skyler. She was sufficiently furious with her evasive relative. All her pretty wiles, her smiles, tears, confidences and flatteries had been wasted, and nothing remained to her but an humbling sense of failure and an enormous dressmaker's bill. She had been fighting against fate, for all along she had been haunted by a conviction that, although by clever stratagems (and lies) she had secured the actual bodily presence of her cousin, nevertheless his heart and his thoughts had been entirely with that odious girl next door. Oh! if ever circumstances afforded her a chance of making Rose Yaldwin uncomfortable, the will would not be lacking.

Annie sought an early opportunity of communicating Roger's message. She was naturally abrupt, and the extraordinary nature of her errand made her shy.

It was a simple task to tell her friend that "Roger had been greatly disappointed at her absence—that he had not enjoyed himself one bit." All this came glibly enough, but matter-of-fact, practical Annie found immense difficulty in blurting out with a broad grin:

"He said he hoped that you would not forget him."

With all the good-will in the world, Miss Baggot knew that the message had been ill delivered, and that, on the whole, messages of that description, despatched through the medium of another woman, were a mistake.

She was afraid to say too much for fear of committing Roger irretrievably, consequently she erred in the opposite direction and said too little. Roger's eager words and impassioned expression, in the dimly-lit ante-room, were but poorly translated by Annie's hard-featured countenance and blunt speech at the prosaic hour of ten o'clock in the morning, and she left the impression on Rose's mind, that, for once in her life, Annie had attempted to perpetrate a joke, and that an ill-timed one.

* * * * *

"Mother," said Miss Baggot, entering the drawing-room one afternoon in her walking things and speaking with unusual excitement, "I have something most extraordinary to tell you."

"It is not often that *you* tell me anything out of the common," returned Mrs. Baggot, laying down her book, "so let me hear what it is at once—meat is down a halfpenny, eh?"

"No," with an indignant gesture; "but Rose and I have just been into town together, and—what do you think? She has been cut dead by people twice!"

"Cut dead!" repeated Mrs. Baggot.

"Yes; at Attwood's, the fishmonger. (By the way, salmon is *still* two shillings a pound.) She was just going up to speak to Susan Prior when she turned her back on her in the rudest way. We could not make it out. And coming along the Mall we met Mrs. Gordon, who always stops and has a talk, as you know—and how hard it is to get away from her!—instead of which, she passed by with a nod to me, looking straight over Rose's head."

"You are sure you did not imagine all this?"

"Mother, how ridiculous you are! How often have you told me that I had no more imagination than an oyster?"

"Yes, that is true. I wonder what it means? Perhaps Clara can throw some light on the subject when she comes in."

"Most likely," returned her sister; and she muttered to herself as she left the room: "It would never surprise *me* if Clara was at the bottom of the whole thing."

Five o'clock found Mrs. Skyler at home, standing in front of the fire slowly removing her gloves, and evidently in a state of uncommon good-humour. It was not often that she returned to the bosom of her family in such a pleasant condition.

"Well," she said, "I've been having tea with Mrs. Grey in Warwick Road, and I'm just in in time ; it has begun to pour—we shall have a wet night."

"Yes," rejoined Mrs. Baggot indifferently as she heard wild gusts of rain lashing the window-panes. The weather was no concern of *hers*. She had her snug, lamp-lit room, and no need to leave her warm fireside.

"I've heard a nice story about Rose Yaldwin," continued Mrs. Skyler, as she made her gloves into a ball and tossed them into an arm-chair. "We cannot have her coming to the house in future."

"Why not, pray?" asked her mother in her sharpest key.

"On account of Annie," returned Clara deliberately.

"On account of *Annie*? You must be raving."

"Wait till you hear," continued Mrs. Skyler with an air of haughty displeasure—raving indeed! "Rose Yaldwin is a most dreadful girl. Mrs. Grey's maid is engaged to a policeman——" Here Mrs. Baggot broke out into an irritating laugh. "And this policeman told her as a great secret, that last September he saw Miss Yaldwin walking on the parade between one and two o'clock in the morning, with a young man."

"How did he know it was Miss Yaldwin?" inquired Mrs. Baggot feebly. Of course it had all come out. She had predicted it to Roger, but for once the fulfilment of her own prophecy caused her intense discomfiture.

"By the dog, Jacky—he was with her. Boag, that's the policeman, could not be positive as to the identity of the man—he was a gentleman, and young—but he could swear to the lady; and *now* what do you say?" concluded Clara triumphantly, warming one be-ringed hand at the fire, and stretching the other open-palmed to her mother, as if demanding some immediate contribution.

"I say that I know all about it," was the astounding answer. "Yes," sitting up very erect; "I have been in the secret all along—a perfectly harmless secret. The man was Roger."

"Roger?" repeated Mrs. Skyler, recoiling a pace.

"You know the general's temper and the life he leads his household," proceeded Mrs. Baggot, now dropping into a tone of easy narrative. "Well, last September he and Rose had a fearful falling out, and she was on the eve of running away—nay, in the act of running away—one night, when Roger met her on the Mall by chance, and talked, and reasoned, and coaxed, and got her to go back—I saw them come in myself—and Roger came straight up here and told me all about it." This was not a strictly correct version of the story, as we know.

"I don't think that your amended edition makes it so much better," said Clara, with her most superior air. "She was out between midnight and one or two o'clock; she was walking with a young man. You must allow me to have my own ideas; I am not easily hoodwinked."

"Then am I to understand that you don't believe your cousin Roger, or Rose, or me?" demanded Mrs. Baggot excitedly.

"The question is," coolly evading the other query, "what complexion the general will put upon the tale when it comes to his ears? I don't mind betting you five pounds, that he will turn Rose out of his house."

"I don't bet on serious matters," rejoined Mrs. Baggot stiffly. "If he turns her out of his house, I shall receive her into mine."

"In which case I shall take my departure," retorted Mrs. Skyler with an air of lofty virtue.

"Very well, Clara, you may," was the totally unexpected reply; "and once you go you shall not return."

Was this her mother who was daring to speak to her in this way? thought Clara, as she opened her long light eyes in angry amazement. Her mother, whom she bullied, flattered, deceived and cajoled? This pale, resolute old lady seemed a complete stranger.

"How many people have heard the story?" she demanded; "since *when* has it been going round the town?"

"Only since last night, and I don't think more than a dozen people know."

"And give a lie half-an-hour's start, and who can catch it? It may be in London by this time. However, if the worst happens, Rose shall have a home here, and of course Roger—who was *always* in love with her—will come home at once and marry her."

This was not the scheme of punishment which Clara had

mentally meted out to her rival ; she was absolutely playing into her hands at the present moment ; and she stood watching her mother, who was in a completely unprecedented frame of mind, go hastily out of the room. No, no, it would not suit her to leave her luxurious quarters, even if Rose Yaldwin was adopted into her family.

She had a comfortable home, free board and lodging, under her mother's roof ; her mother was liberal enough, she paid for her washing, stamps, entertainments, and allowed her to order flies at her own discretion. These little items were not valued at the moment, but supposing she had to provide for all these things herself ? her four hundred a year would not go far. No, no, she would not move off, and give her share of a warm nest, to that detestable girl, who seemed to bewitch all her relations. Meanwhile she heard hasty footsteps overhead in her mother's room, callings, bangings of doors, and some one quickly descending the stairs ; she went into the hall, and was confronted by her mother in her oldest bonnet and a waterproof. Mrs. Baggot was certainly very cross. She hated getting wet, as if she were a cat. She never went abroad a foot in bad weather, or weather unsuited to French boots and silk stockings, and here she was about to sally forth in the teeth of a dark February evening and amid torrents of rain.

"Where are you going ?" inquired Clara tragically.

"Out," was the stern laconic reply.

"But where, this awful night ?"

"I'm going to your friend, Mrs. Grey. I must stop this story at once ; there is not a moment to lose."

"And you've never called on Mrs. Grey, and it's pouring cats and dogs ; there's not a fly to be had, and it's three-quarters of a mile to Warwick Road," cried Clara, launching objection after objection.

"Yes ; all the same I'm going," seizing an umbrella and opening the door.

"You could not do more, if it was one of us," remonstrated Clara.

"If it was *you* I would not do as much. I shall probably get my death ; you are old and well able to look after yourself, but Rose is a mere child, with few friends, and I promised Roger."

And so saying, she jerked up her dress, and began to descend

the steps with daintily shod feet, and then tripped down the wet walk with the cautious gait of one who was painfully conscious of thin stockings, and Louis Quatorze heels.

"So you promised Roger, did you?" repeated Clara, standing in the open doorway, and gazing mechanically after her departing parent. "I wish I had known all this before—it would have saved me an immense outlay of time, worry and money."

* * * * *

With the rain beating in her face, and the wind trying to wrest the umbrella from her, Mrs. Baggot struggled bravely on regardless of muddy roads, puddles and the weather, for her mind was intensely preoccupied with respect to her approaching interview.

"It's going to be a duel *à la mort*," she said, "and one or other of us will practically fall."

As she came to this fierce conclusion, she stopped before a small brilliantly lit up house in a terrace.

There was a light in the hall, in the room next the hall, in all the windows upstairs, and as she entered, a sound of loud laughing was audible. She removed her cloak, gave her name distinctly to the servant, and followed her quickly up to the drawing-room. As the maid threw open the door and announced, "Mrs. Baggot," there was an instantaneous silence.

Mrs. Baggot had never called before, and now she arrived alone at half past six, and on a pouring wet evening—but she never did things like other people.

It was a pretty little room, with snug chairs, Persian rugs, shaded lamps, and photographs; indeed, at first, it seemed all lamp shades and photographs.

Mrs. Grey was a pretty little woman (really little), with prominent blue eyes, brilliant white teeth and light brown hair. She said she was twenty-nine—but her dear bosom friends generally added another decade. She had come to reside in Morpington two years previously, and gradually insinuated herself into society. She dressed well, gave pleasant luncheons and charming afternoon teas—especially on Sundays. She numbered more men than women among her acquaintances, but had a certain number of ardent intimates of her own sex, which number included Mrs. Skyler. Mr. Grey, an undefined individual, was somewhere abroad; there was an immense photograph of him on an easel,

and to this, his wife gaily introduced her visitors, saying "it was the next best thing to presenting them to the original." To the question, "When will he be home? when do you expect him?" her answers were copious, but vague. Mrs. Grey, though she made great fun of Mrs. Baggot, was secretly annoyed that that eccentric lady had never deigned to call upon her (nor had the Yaldwins), and she was, with all her vagaries, one of the upper ten and in the most exclusive set in Morpington. Here she was at last, looking decidedly forbidding, and sternly rejecting all offers of tea. She did not attempt to join in the general talk. No, after she had given her opinion of the weather, she simply sat in silence, and then it suddenly dawned upon her hostess, that she had come with a purpose, and was determined to sit the others out.

After a short time these gay guests—a very young man with an eye-glass and a loud laugh, and two middle-aged ladies with smart bonnets and "revived" hair—took their departure; and as soon as the door had closed upon them, Mrs. Baggot at once found her voice.

"Mrs. Grey," she began, "you are no doubt surprised to see *me* here on such a day, and at such an hour. Nothing but a most urgent matter would have brought me out. I have come to speak to you privately about Miss Yaldwin."

"Yes?" assented the other with an impertinent elevation of her arched eyebrows. She now saw her way to paying out Mrs. Baby Baggot for being stuck-up, and not having called upon her, and she drawled in her company voice:

"But, perhaps, the less we say of that girl the *better*?"

"I quite agree with you—as soon as this story is silenced," rejoined her visitor with emphasis.

"Silenced?" echoed Mrs. Grey with an interrogative smile, that was absolutely maddening.

"I suppose Clara has given me the true account?" proceeded Mrs. Baggot, and she recapitulated it word for word.

"Yes, that is the true unvarnished tale."

"And when did you hear it?"

"Only last night."

"Do many know?"

"Only about a dozen. I just dropped a hint to the Priors, and Gordons, and Smithes—people with *daughters*."

"I understand. Well," now suddenly rising to her feet, "I come to tell you, that I know all about it. Rose was running away from home, and my nephew happily met her, and brought her back. Rose is a good girl——"

"I'm afraid you will find it difficult to get other people to agree with you," responded Mrs. Grey with a placid smile.

"They will agree with me if *you* will help me, Mrs. Grey, and put an end to the scandal at once."

"Oh, my dear Mrs. Baggot!" in a tone of mock-humility, "you value my powers absurdly. I could no more stop it now, than turn the Thames. If I had known her personally, or even known *you*"—with an insolent look—"I might have taken some interest in the matter; but you can scarcely expect me to endeavour to work a miracle, for a hot-headed and, to say the least of it, sly and imprudent young person, who is a total stranger."

"Do you know—have you any idea of what may be the result of your discovery?" demanded Mrs. Baggot with a catch in her breath.

"Well," with a little shrug, "I should not wonder if her grandfather, who, from all I can hear, is an outrageous old bear, were to bundle her out of the house—out of Morpington."

"And you won't raise a finger to prevent it?"

"My dear lady, why should I, even if I could?"

"I will tell you why—you can and shall," said Mrs. Baggot, who was extremely pale, and whose voice had a ring of repressed passion. "Unless this story is stopped at once," and she shook her gloved finger impressively, "*you* will have to leave Morpington. I give you"—and she glanced at the clock—"just twenty-four hours."

"Now, really, Mrs. Baggot," protested her hostess, with a patronizing laugh, "I always heard that you were eccentric—but I never supposed——"

"You never supposed that I knew that you were the notorious Mrs. Grey, of Jhansi?" interrupted her visitor.

Mrs. Grey's face became ashy grey; her great bold eyes looked into Mrs. Baggot's with an expression of horror.

"What do you mean?" she stammered in a faint voice.

"Just precisely what I say, and *you* would herd an innocent girl out of society. Oh, what a place this world is, to be sure! I have always known who you were, from the very day you

arrived, and up to the present I have never told a soul. I did not call on you, as you can easily understand, but I held my tongue, for I thought you probably wanted to make a fresh start in life, and as far as I was concerned, you should have your chance. And to think of your being the first to cast a stone!" and she glanced upwards, as if she was astonished to behold the ceiling in its place.

"You are talking the most insane nonsense. How dare you identify me with—with that creature?" cried Mrs. Grey hoarsely.

"I am, as you know, speaking the simple truth. I saw you when you first went out to India fifteen years ago. You were pointed out to me at Allahabad. You were a very pretty woman *then*, and I have a good memory for faces. Grey is a common name, but yours is an uncommon countenance, and I can prove what I say a hundred times over."

"I defy you to prove anything against me, you libellous old scandal-monger," screamed Mrs. Grey hysterically. "Give me one proof."

Mrs. Baggot glanced at the door—it was half open—and then she bent forward and whispered into her hostess's ear.

Mrs. Grey drew back and gasped. Her face became suddenly livid. She looked fifty years of age. Then she broke down completely, and began to sob, hard dry sobs, as she leant her forehead against the mantelpiece and groaned out:

"And it has followed me here."

"Yes, it has; and you confess that you are 'that creature,' as you call yourself?"

"And what can I do—for—Miss Yaldwin?"

"Whatever you please. You are now acting solely in your *own* interests; but if by to-morrow this scandal about her is not ground down and stamped out to the very last spark, by the next morning the other story—your story—will be known from end to end of Morpington. I have only to whisper it to Chatty Stratton and to old Mrs. Skinder, and it will go far and wide. Remember that I implored your forbearance in the first instance—and in vain. You had no more mercy than a crocodile. I only fell back on your own past, as a last resource. It is the sole weapon with which I can defend Rose Yaldwin—and I shall use my power remorselessly."

"What am I to do? What do you suggest?" inquired her listener sullenly.

"I am sure you need not apply to *me*. I have always understood that you are marvellously fertile in resources. You might ask your friends to tea, or write, or call. As long as you assure them, that there is not a breath against Miss Yaldwin, the means of the communication are immaterial; and if the fact is not known, marked and inwardly digested, by to-morrow night, you will be the sufferer, and under any circumstances I shall tell Clara. She can keep a secret, and I think it right that she should know who you are."

"You are a hard woman, Mrs. Baggot."

"By no means. On the contrary, I am generally considered deplorably *soft*. And I have not been hard to you. Have I not guarded your story most religiously? Do you think any of your dear bosom friends would have done as much?"

"You are right. You have been generous to me, and I—yes, from first to last, I have behaved like a beast! Yes, I will do my best to carry out your wishes; in fact, I will carry them out without fail," she added, with sudden resolution, "and I will speak to Price and the policeman."

"As to the policeman, you may send him to me, if you please. I will tell him the whole truth, and I am sure he will believe me and hold his tongue; and the sooner you have a word with your maid the better. Good night," said Mrs. Baggot, not attempting to shake hands. "I rely upon your promise. Remember, if you break it, that I shall keep mine."

The old lady then hurried briskly downstairs, and took her waterproof, and her departure.

"Well, mother?" said Clara, opening the door and eagerly relieving her of her wet umbrella. "What ages you have been! What have you arranged with Mrs. Grey? You did not get much satisfaction from her, I am certain. Did you?"

"I got all that I required," replied Mrs. Baggot, as she divested herself of her dripping cloak in the hall. "That story will be crushed out by her to-morrow. By to-morrow night, it will be as if it had never been uttered."

"How on earth did you manage it?"

"By the magic of a name. Clara, will you promise to keep what I say to yourself?"

"Yes, of course."

"On your word of honour?"

"On my word of honour. And what was the magic name?" she inquired eagerly.

"You have heard of Mrs. Grey, of Jhansi?"

"I should rather think I *had*," with emphatic scorn. "But why?"

"Because Mrs. Grey, late of Jhansi, is the lady you had tea with this evening."

"What!" almost shrieked Mrs. Skyler, staggering against the hat-stand. "The woman who was forbidden Government House—the woman who——"

"Hus-s-s-sh," interrupted her mother. "As Annie would say, *Remember the servants*. However, thank goodness, I have settled the other affair, and it certainly seems rather astonishing that the woman who was going to turn an orphan girl out of her home—the woman whose sense of propriety has been so shockingly outraged—should prove to be none other than that too notorious person. You think that I know queer people, my dear, and pick up some undesirable acquaintances; but you see, after all, I am more exclusive than you imagined. I never made a friend of Mrs. Grey, of Jhansi."

CHAPTER XXIV.

VARIOUS SPECULATIONS.

THE immediate result of Mrs. Baggot's embassy, was a violent cold in the head. Rose came in to inquire for the invalid two days after her expedition, and found her, nursing herself over the fire, in somewhat low spirits, and armed with a carbolic smoke ball.

"So I hear you went out in all the wet, the night before last," said Rose, who conversed with Mrs. Baggot in terms of easy affection. "I don't wonder you are laid up."

"Pray, how do you know I was out?" sniffed Mrs. Baggot.

"Leach saw you coming in," was the ready reply.

"Leach sees too much," and she indulged in a prodigious sneeze.

"But, dear Mrs. Baggot, what *could* have possessed you to venture out in such weather? Why did you not send Annie, or even Wickes?"

"It was a matter of business, my love. I was obliged to see to it myself, as it was rather important. Now sit down and tell me all your news."

"I have not much, as usual," seating herself. "Grandpapa went up to town by the early train, to see some rare Cashmere stamps, and to attend a meeting of his special stamp 'ring.' I have had quite a pressing invitation to go to tea at the Priors' to-morrow afternoon. The other morning, in town, Mrs. Prior turned her back upon me, and now she writes and signs herself, 'yours ever affectionately;' and the same day Mrs. Prior cut me, Mrs. Gordon passed me by with a queer sort of half bow between Annie and me. Yet, to-day, she came all the way across the road, to speak to me, and kept me for ten minutes. Now I wonder what it all means? What do you think, Mrs. Baggot?"

Mrs. Baggot coughed, and merely shook her head. Silence was golden in the present instance. And Rose little dreamt that there was any connection between Mrs. Baggot's cold and Mrs. Prior's pressing invitation.

Miss Yaldwin was not the only person who was lost in astonishment at this particular period.

Many of her own sex, marvelled deeply at the sudden coolness between Mrs. Grey and Mrs. Skyler.

They had been so intimate, and now Mrs. Grey's doors were never darkened by her friend's graceful shadow. They bowed when they met, but that was all, and unkind cynics laughed and made disagreeable remarks about "women's friendships." Mrs. Grey was certainly not as conspicuously *en évidence* as formerly. She had retired into her shell. She had joined the local clothing club, and mothers' meetings—and all the world wondered.

Annie Baggot also found food for speculation at this time. Accustomed as she was, to her unmanageable and youthful parent's wild follies and misdemeanours, she wondered much, oh, *very* much, to find one day, on opening the boudoir door, that parent closeted with a policeman! Boag had been summoned and duly appeared, reeking of new cloth and blacklead. At first he fully expected to be set upon the track of some sly domestic thief. Not at all. Mrs. Baggot wished to speak to him privately, respecting a very serious family matter, and she spoke

for ten minutes, to some purpose. She told him a true tale, concluding her narrative with these words :

“ You see, Boag, what trust I am putting in your honour. Now, at this moment, you know a good deal more of General Yaldwin’s affairs than he does himself. You know him, and you know what the result will be if this unfortunate escapade ever comes to his ears. I am relying confidently on your assistance to hush the matter up ; it was no crime.”

“ No, ma’am, it was but natural ; and if I may say so, I’m only surprised the young lady did not break out years ago. He is a terrible old gent. No one could blame any one, for making a bolt of it from him, he has eyes all over his head, and takes everything on himself. What do you think he says to me one day ? ‘ I say, constable, your boots aren’t properly blacked.’ Now, what was that to him ? ” demanded Boag, with just indignation.

Boag knew Mrs. Baggot well. She was known to him as one of the most charitable ladies in the town. His own relations had several reasons to bless her kind offices, and he was aware of the many secret errands of mercy, on which her prim elderly maid was despatched. He respected Mrs. Baggot sincerely, and was deeply honoured by her confidence. She had spoken to him just as if he was a gentleman—and he intended to live up to the part.

Yes, Wickes, the prim maid, to whom Clara strongly objected, because she was slow, because she did not wear smart dresses, and because her hands were cold, was greatly indebted to her mistress. She adored her, and revered her, from the top hair of her chestnut *toupée* to the heel of her small bronze shoe. She could (if she had dared) unfold a tale of her munificent charities—a tale that would have afforded a ready answer to Mrs. Skyler’s unsolved problem :

“ I wonder what my mother has done with all her money ? She does not spend half her income. I wonder how much she will *leave* ? ”

(To be continued.)

The British Sovereign Ladies of the Brunswick Dynasty.

No. III.—CHARLOTTE OF MECKLENBURG, CONSORT OF GEORGE III.

HARSHLY as she was judged by a certain section of her contemporaries ; bitterly as she was often reviled by the enemies of kingcraft and monarchy—the lapse of time has not rendered it necessary either to rehabilitate or to whitewash the character of Charlotte, consort of George the Third. Indeed, it would scarcely be correct to say that her contemporaries generally condemned her at all, and as the events of the stirring era through which she lived have receded into historical perspective, her figure and her attitude towards a nation of which, at times, it might have been truly predicated, “ No king can govern and no god can please,” have steadily won sympathy and respect. Knowing what we now know of the court and times of George the Third ; realizing how difficult it must have been to bear with a lunatic husband on the one hand and with an undutiful son on the other, we can measure at its true worth much of the abuse, misrepresentation and malice of which Queen Charlotte was the recipient for more than a quarter of a century.

The town of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, which constitutes the capital of the duchy of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, is not a very large one at the present day. One hundred and sixty years ago it was smaller even than it is now. The principal object of interest, as the writer of a guide book would say, is a fine ducal castle of considerable antiquity. It was within the walls of this castle that in the month of May, 1744, the eyes of the third British queen of the Brunswick dynasty opened to the light.

Charlotte of Mecklenburg was the youngest daughter of Charles Lewis, brother of the third Duke of Mecklenburg, who died in 1751. Her mother, the Princess Albertine Elizabeth, was a good pious woman, which, when the profligate character of many of the courts of Europe in her time is taken into consideration, is saying a great deal. Before this amiable princess had

seen many summers the disastrous Seven Years' War plunged her country into the direst misery. Grief for the hardships under which her subjects were groaning sent her to an untimely grave in 1740.

Were it not for the fact that so many appear incapable of believing that royal children are like all other children, it might seem superfluous for us to say that the childhood of Charlotte resembled the childhood of most little damsels who have the good fortune to be born, as the phrase goes, with a silver spoon in their mouths. Her education was not neglected. Competent instructors were provided to train her up in the way she should go, and all hurtful influences were as far as possible excluded. The important office of governess to the young princess was committed to Madame de Grabow, a lady of noble birth and great attainments, whose lyrical compositions earned for her not unjustly the title of "the German Sappho ;" and the talents and sound scholarship of Genzner, an eminent divine of the Lutheran Church, were pressed into the service for natural history and philosophy. Under the instructions of these two able preceptors the Princess Charlotte made a very respectable progress along the pathway of knowledge ; and it may be easily conjectured :

" How happily the days
Of Thalaba went by."

But she was soon to leave this little land of Goshen for the great wilderness of the world. Her days flowed on tranquilly until the year 1762, when there came a fluttering of the Mecklenburg-Strelitz doves.

While Caroline had been growing steadily up from infancy to maidenhood, George William Frederick, eldest son of Frederick Lewis, Prince of Wales, and Augusta, daughter of Frederick, Duke of Saxe-Gotha, had ascended the throne of England in 1760. He bore the title of George the Third, and was destined to sway the rod of empire for a period of sixty years, a longer term than that of any previous British sovereign. At the date of his succession King George had barely attained his twenty-second year. His father, Frederick, Prince of Wales, had died in 1751, and, like that other famous hero, nothing in his life became him like the leaving it. While the loyal bards of the universities of Oxford and Cambridge were acting after their

kind by bewailing, in sonorous pentameters, the loss of this estimable potentate, whose chief pastime was debauchery, the wicked, but more truthful, world said to itself, as a naughty satirist did :

“ Here lies Fred,
Who was alive and is dead ;
Had it been his father,
I had much rather ;
Had it been his brother,
Still better than another ;
Had it been his sister,
No one would have missed her ;
Had it been the whole generation,
Still better for the nation.
But since 'tis only Fred,
Who was alive and is dead,
There's no more to be said.”

The foregoing lines are certainly not remarkable for the graces of poetic composition, but we have no hesitation in affirming that they are immeasurably superior to some which the deceased prince was in the habit of inditing, and of which a peer, whose critical opinion of them was asked, sarcastically replied, “ Sir, they are worthy of your Royal Highness ! ”

Frederick, Prince of Wales, and his consort, as our readers will not be surprised to learn, never troubled their heads much about the education of their children. Dunces they were, and dunces they remained. The consequence was that when some of them arrived at years of discretion, they were signalized to a remarkable extent by indiscretion. How much, for example, he who in later days became George the Third had profited by the instructions of such governors, governesses, tutors and teachers of accomplishments as had danced attendance upon him, may be inferred from the fact that at the age of eleven he was unable correctly to read his mother tongue. From boyhood to early manhood he was treated as if the highest qualification for a king in perspective were what it seemingly is for legislators and social reformers—ignorance. The only real teacher that the boy ever had was the celebrated comedian, James Quin, who trained the royal children in the principles of elocution and superintended the stage arrangements at the private theatricals which were sometimes held at Leicester House.

George the Third had hardly ascended the British throne before he began to look out for a help-meet for him. His Majesty had at first hoped to induce Lady Sarah Lennox to share the crown with him, but her ladyship was not to be coaxed into any such arrangement. Colonel David Graham was then commissioned to visit the various courts of Europe in search of a suitable wife. Nor did he fail to find one. The "canny Scot" bent his steps to Strelitz. At Strelitz he saw the Princess Caroline. Carefully he noted all there was to note. In due course, George, King of England, received a dispatch containing the eulogy of Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz. Intoxicated with what he read, which was ratified by what he was told by certain confidential friends who spoke from personal knowledge, George demanded of Lewis Frederick, Duke of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, the hand of his daughter in marriage.* Need we say that this favour was conceded with exceeding great joy?

It must be borne clearly in mind that not a whisper of these negotiations had as yet been breathed beyond the charmed circle of the court. Nor was it until the month of July, 1761, that George the Third graciously favoured his minister, Lord Bute with his matrimonial intentions. Lord Bute was not slow in acquainting his friends, who in their turn acquainted their sisters their cousins and their aunts, and then, as generally happens in such cases :

"The flying rumours gathered as they rolled ;
Scarce any tale was sooner heard than told,
And all who told it added something new,
And all who heard it made enlargement too."

Few, however, had the faintest knowledge of her who was to be their queen, and probably Horace Walpole never wrote truer words than when he said, "There are not six men in England who knew that such a princess existed." †

After much palaver the marriage ceremony was definitely fixed for the 8th of September, 1761. Under the safe conduct of three English duchesses, Ancaster, Hamilton and Effingham, the young princess left her quiet and happy home at Mecklenburg-Strelitz for Cuxhaven, a German seaport situated at the mouth

* Jesse's "Memoirs of the Life and Reign of George III.," i., 88.

† "Letters," ed. Cunningham.

of the Elbe. At Cuxhaven the party embarked for old England's shores, and after a tempestuous passage across the German Ocean, the royal yacht anchored safely in the haven of Harwich. According to the interesting excerpts from the Stuart manuscripts, which were first printed by Jesse, the eminent historian, the future queen experienced nothing of the pains of *mal de mer*. While her attendants were prostrated with the qualms of that bugbear of nervous voyagers in that age as in this, Charlotte, we are assured, remained "undaunted ; consoled them, prayed, sang Luther's hymns, and when the tempest a little subsided, played 'God save the King' on her guitar."

It was early in the afternoon of the 8th September, 1761, that Charlotte gazed for the first time in her life on London scenes and London people. Through the pleasant village of Islington, past Sadler's and Bagnigge Wells, along the New Road (now the Euston), at that time bounded on either side by rich green fields, where the cows grazed at leisure and the young lambs skipped with their dams, where boys delighted to fly their kites and trundle their hoops, where artists delighted to commit to canvas the aspect of the distant northern heights, long since obscured from view by miles of intervening streets and houses, the royal *cortège* took its way. Hyde Park was entered from the Oxford Road, now Oxford Street, hardly a stone's-throw from Tyburn gibbet, and thence they drove down Constitution Hill to St. James's Palace. All along the route the jubilant populace came out in droves to greet their future queen. Their loyalty, their patriotism, their characteristic good humour were strikingly displayed. As she went on her way the young princess created a most favourable impression, and it was well for her that she did, for she was to sojourn among the English people for more than half a century. Horace Walpole was an interested spectator of Charlotte's arrival in the metropolis, and his next letter to his friend, the Earl of Strafford, was, therefore, full of what he had seen. "The noise," wrote he, "of coaches, chaises, horsemen, mob, that have been to see her pass through the parks, is so prodigious that I cannot distinguish the guns. I am going to be dressed, and before even shall be launched in the crowd. Pray for me." * St. James's Palace was reached shortly

* "Letters," ii., 431.

after three o'clock. The young princess was met at the gates by the Duke of York, who conducted her to the garden, where for the first time she met the gaze of her future spouse. Gallantly embracing her, the king led her into the palace, where she was introduced in turn to the members of the Royal Family. Thence she was conducted to her apartment, in order to undergo the trying ordeal known as "dressing for dinner," one of the miseries of human life from which even crowned heads can procure no exemption.

Dinner concluded shortly before nine o'clock in the evening, and the king and his bride, accompanied by their guests, adjourned to the royal chapel, where the marriage ceremony was solemnized. The service was read by the Primate, Dr. Thomas Secker, and the bride was given away by the Duke of Cumberland. The sight was, of course, far too interesting for Walpole to miss. He was in the thick of it, and his next correspondent was furnished with a full, perfect and sufficient account of it. "The queen," he wrote, "was in white and silver. An endless mantle of violet-coloured velvet lined with ermine, and attempted to be fastened on her shoulder by a bunch of huge pearls, dragged itself and almost the rest of her clothes half-way down her waist. On her head was a beautiful little tiara of diamonds, worth three-score thousand pounds, which she is to wear at the coronation." Charlotte's train was borne by ten peeresses, and it may be interesting to some of our readers to learn that among these ten peeresses, Lady Elizabeth Russell was extremely handsome, Lady Elizabeth Keppel was very pretty, and that the star of the evening was the stately Lady Sarah Lennox, who had had the courage to decline the king's gracious offer of his hand and heart.

More space than we could possibly afford would alone suffice, were we disposed adequately to relate the grand doings which elapsed between Charlotte's marriage and the coronation. For some days she and her spouse were deluged with congratulatory addresses (which, in nine cases out of ten, we fear, were as hollow as they were congratulatory) from every quarter of the realm. Among the number was one from the married ladies of St. Albans. This missive so tickled some of the merry wags of the town that they indited a similar composition, purporting to be a petition of the old maids, in which the queen was solemnly

assured that it was only from a lack of discernment on the part of the sterner sex, and not from any fault on their own part, which compelled them to remain unmated.

The abbey church of Westminster had in the previous ages of its existence witnessed many magnificent spectacles, but they were all outvied by that which attended the coronation of Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz and George the Third of England, on the 22nd of September, 1761. Walpole declared that "it was all delightful," and if so fastidious a judge as he said so we may be perfectly sure that it was. Dean Stanley asserts that it was on this memorable occasion that the English representatives of the Dukes of Aquitaine and Normandy appeared for the last time, and that with them perished all British sway over the French.* The superstitious were much concerned at the fall, during the ceremony, of the largest pearl from the crown, and naturally enough, at a later date, when the United States of America forced the king into an unwilling acknowledgment of their political independence, this mishap was brought to remembrance by the poet :

"When Pitt resigned, a nation's tears will own,
Then fell the brightest jewel of the crown."

The inevitable sermon was preached by Archbishop Drummond, and the nuptial bonds were forged by Dr. Secker. Some of our readers may call to mind a noteworthy incident of this coronation, which is noted by the Wizard of the North, in that vivid description of the ceremony which he has introduced into his romance of "Red Gauntlet." Prince Charles Edward, the Young Pretender, of all the king's rivals perhaps the most formidable, watched the proceedings, incognito, from one of the galleries of the abbey. "Bonny Prince Charlie" was then lurking in London under the assumed name of Brown, and was detected in Westminster Abbey by one of his secret adherents, of whom indeed there were then not a few to be found in the metropolis.† Outwardly these people were loyalists, but inwardly they were traitors, and

* "Historical Memorials of Westminster," p. 88.

† Further proof of the truth of this remark may be seen in the "Gentleman's Magazine," 1764, p. 24, and Nicholls' "Literary Anecdotes," ix., p. 401.

doubtless were in the habit of singing to themselves like the Popish recusant :

“The illustrious house of Hanover,
And Protestant succession,
To these I have allegiance sworn,
While they can keep possession.”

Notwithstanding the vast concourse of spectators that was present, the coronation ceremony was signalized by no disasters. It is related that several of the ladies who appeared in the processions had their heads dressed the preceding evening, and reposed all night in arm-chairs in order to prevent any disarrangement of their locks. It is also related that the public curiosity to view the spectacle was so great, that people who had more money than they knew what to do with readily paid ten guineas for good positions, which were, in most cases, secured long before dawn on the morning of the ceremony.* Many thousands were turned away from the abbey doors, but as the spectacular mania, like the *cacoethes scribendi*, was one which must be humoured at any cost, it was reproduced at the playhouses. So greatly was this puppet-show relished that for many years it was tagged on at the theatres whenever the historical plays of Shakespeare were represented at them. Among the interested sightseers at the coronation was worthy Thomas Gray, the author of the immortal “Elegy in a Country Churchyard,” who had quitted his Cambridge hermitage to revel among the literary treasures of the library of the British Museum and to rummage the bookstalls of Moorfields and Little Britain. Gray contrived to secure the Lord Chamberlain’s box in Westminster Hall, and as he resembled the spare Cassius in being a great observer who looked quite through the deeds of men, he saw all that there was to see. Writing to his friend, the Reverend James Brown, on the 24th of September, 1761, the poet gave his correspondent a word-picture of the ceremony. “The instant the queen’s canopy entered,” he wrote, “fire was given to all the lustres at once by trains of prepared flax that reached from one to the other. To me it seemed an interval of not half a minute before the whole was in a blaze of splendour. It is true that for that half minute it rained

* Williams’s “Brief Memoir,” 1819 ; Bonnell Thornton’s “Chapters,” cited by Oulton in his “Memoirs.”

fire upon the heads of all the spectators (the flax falling in large flakes), and the ladies, queen and all, were in no small terror, but no mischief ensued. It was out as soon as it fell, and the most magnificent spectacle I ever beheld remained. The king (bowing to the lords as he passed), with his crown on his head and the sceptre and orb in his hands, took his place with great majesty and grace. So did the queen with her crown, sceptre and rod. Then supper was served in gold plate. The Earl Talbot, Duke of Bedford and Earl Effingham, in their robes, all three on horseback, prancing and curveting like the hobby horses in the Rehearsal, ushered in the courses to the foot of the *haut pas*. Between the courses the Champion performed his part with applause. The Earl of Denbigh carved for the king, the Earl of Holderness for the queen. They both ate like farmers. At the board's end on the right supped the Dukes of York and Cumberland; on the left, Lady Augusta, all of them very rich in jewels. The maple cups, the wafers, the falcons &c., were brought up and presented in form, three persons were knighted, and before ten the king and queen retired." * In addition to the academical anchorite to whom we are indebted for this glimpse of court pageantry, there were others who recorded their impressions of the scene, and we may adduce the testimony of Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu, who was also present at the ceremony. "The ladies," she wrote, "made a glorious appearance. Wherever there was any beauty of countenance, or shape, or air, they were all heightened by the dress. Lady Talbot was a fine figure."† Devotion to the study of classical literature had clearly not diminished Mrs. Montagu's partiality for the pomps and vanities of this wicked world.

Dismissing now the subject of bridals and coronations to all for whom they possess any interest, let us revert to Queen Charlotte, who, there is much reason to believe, saw the vanity of it all and would have been ready to exclaim with the poet:

"Insulting chance ne'er called with louder voice
On swelling mortals to be proud no more."

Upon the public mind she had made a favourable impres-

* Gray's "Correspondence," ed. Gosse, iii., pp. 114-115.

† "Letters," iv., 364.

sion. The popular verdict was reflected in the familiar Virgilian line :

“ Namque haud tibi vultus
Mortalis, nec vox hominem sonat. O dea certe ! ”

For a young woman of only eighteen summers, Charlotte had indeed a difficult task before her. Her enemies, if she had any, were few in number. Radicals had not yet learned to lay their profane hands upon the sanctity of our “ glorious Constitution in Church and State.” Whigs, however jealously they affected to regard encroachments on the liberty of the subject, had not yet the courage of their opinions. Tories, it need hardly be said, were brimming over with loyalty. In these circumstances the king experienced no difficulty in obtaining from a complaisant House of Commons an annual provision of one hundred thousand pounds ; as many persons would say, a mere trifle. The palaces which her predecessors had occupied were placed at the disposal of the new queen, and Richmond Park and Somerset House were added to the number of them. As the king had taken a fancy to Buckingham House, this commodious residence was purchased for a trifling twenty thousand pounds, and subsequently presented to Charlotte.

Joy bells pealed loud and long in London on August 12th, 1762. And it was natural that they should, for the walls of Buckingham Palace were echoing and re-echoing to the wailings of an heir to the throne. Profuse and diverse were the congratulations which poured in upon the royal parents, but their joy was destined soon to be turned into sorrow, and they, in common with all mankind since the days of Adam and Eve, were to experience the melancholy truth :

“ How sharper than a serpent’s tooth it is
To have a thankless child.”

We can well believe that it must have needed all the forbearance of Charlotte and her spouse to bear with George, Prince of Wales, during his passage from youth to man’s estate, so numerous were his sins, his negligences and his ignorances. From 1762 to 1777 scarcely a year elapsed without a son or a daughter being added to the royal family. In the end Charlotte became the mother of fifteen children, of whom the last three,

Octavius, Alfred and Amelia, preceded their mother to the grave.

During the twenty years which followed her accession to the throne, the queen steadily increased in favour with her subjects. Her kindness was great. Her charity was unbounded, although not exactly of the type which complacently contents itself with sending a solitary five-pound note to the Society for the Encouragement of Mendicity among the Poor, on the distinct understanding that it is acknowledged the very next day in the columns of the *Times*. Moreover, Charlotte's charities were usually dispensed with other people's money, and in such circumstances it is not difficult to be generous. The easy and graceful manner in which the queen presided over the festivities of the court and the drawing-room won high encomiums in an age when *gaucherie* had not yet become what we fear it now is, a somewhat honourable distinction. Her fondness for dancing, for birthday splendour and for court display, naturally gladdened the hearts of the London tradesmen. Her demeanour towards her inferiors was invariably gracious and condescending. Her command of the English language was all but perfect, and we have not the least doubt that her Majesty was fully equal to the task of inditing essays similar to those of Dr. Johnson's "Rambles" and "Idlers," which in those days were the criteria of English prose composition. Above all, Charlotte's accents were always kind, and what the grief-stricken Lear with great felicity says of the injured Cordelia may fittingly be applied to her :

" Her voice was ever soft,
Gentle and low ; an excellent thing in woman."

Lord Chesterfield, that most polished, most accomplished courtier of his age, saw much of Charlotte in private life, and, in writing to his son in 1763, he said, " You do not know the character of the queen. Here it is. She is a good woman, a good wife, a tender mother, and an unmeddling queen."* These words were written by Chesterfield in 1763. They would have been equally applicable in 1783. It is deserving of mention that Charlotte endowed an asylum for decayed gentlewomen in Bedfordshire and that she became a patroness of the Magdalen Hospital. The latter step was the more creditable to her, inasmuch as her

* " Letters," ed. Lord Stanhope, iv., 400.

predecessors had always held studiously aloof from the patronage of such an institution in any shape or form. Like all great folk, Charlotte had to take her share of quizzing. But then it must be remembered that she really had what so many of her Phari-saical sisters only pretended to have, a heart full of the milk of human kindness. It is true that she united a taste for ostentation with a taste for economy and a simplicity in her mode of living which the cavillers were not slow in twisting into absolute parsimony. But their cavils are not worth serious refutation. The queen's kindness to that genial old soul, Mrs. Delany, widow of Dr. Patrick Delany, was very great, and would of itself be sufficient to rebut the charge of parsimony. In Mrs. Delany's voluminous correspondence, edited by Lady Llanover, there are constant references to the favours which she received at the queen's hands during her residence at Windsor in 1785. "It is impossible for me," wrote Mrs. Delany on one occasion, "to do justice to her great condescension and tenderness, which were almost equal to what I had lost."

Meanwhile the queen's eldest son had reached man's estate. As we have already intimated, his Royal Highness was anything but one of those good young men that we sometimes read about in books. A sad dog he had ever been, and a sad dog it was absolutely certain he ever would be. We are quite willing to admit what some of his eulogists claim for him, that his manners were captivating, that his sense of humour was keen, that his readiness to make a promise was as great as his readiness to break one. So far so good. But we must not allow our recognition of all this to blind our eyes to his perfidy, his duplicity, his meanness, his crass follies, and his misspent life. Governors, pastors and masters, clerical and lay, could do nothing with this wayward stripling. At twenty-one years of age his Royal Highness found more charms in the vicinity of stables and dog-kennels, and in the conversation of grooms, ostlers and footmen, than he did in the society of worthy men and the conversation of virtuous women. The result was that when the prince entered into possession of Carlton House, which a grateful nation furnished for his use, in Pall Mall, he initiated a reign of revelry and debauchery which ended only at the expiration of a third of a century. The sole aim of his existence was amusement, and, like the young man who inspired the

muse of Longfellow, he refused to be told, in mournful numbers, life is but an empty dream.

Sorely as Queen Charlotte's equanimity was tried by the vagaries of her eldest son, it was to be even more sorely tried by those of her husband. In the spring of 1789 George the Third became unmistakably insane. Not content with wondering how apples got into dumplings and smoke out of the chimney, his Majesty walked into the royal gardens and amused himself by plucking up the flowers by their roots to see whether they were growing:

"With anxious eye
And head awry

peeping like a magpie into a marrow-bone." In these circumstances far-seeing politicians began to shake their heads, and to talk with bated breath, for the first time for many years, of a Regency. But William Pitt was then in power, and it soon became apparent that William Pitt was decidedly averse from the proposal. The wily premier knew the character of "the first gentleman in Europe" far too well to regard with favourable eyes the prospect of being called upon to play second fiddle to his Royal Highness. Pitt's opponents, however, took a different view of the subject, and tried to convert the queen to their views. She, poor woman, occupied a most embarrassing position. From the day that she ascended the throne she had made a point of refraining, and in our judgment most wisely, from any attempts at directing the affairs of the nation. For maintaining this attitude the nation had respected her. It was considered, and not without reason, that a politician in petticoats, like a poor relation, is one of the most irrelevant things in nature, and that the attitude of all ladies, and especially of sovereign ladies, towards affairs of state should be that of the needy knife-grinder of the "Anti-Jacobin:"

"For my own part
I never love to meddle with politics, sir."

Upon this principle, as we have said, Caroline had, hitherto, invariably acted. Nor is posterity likely to blame her for her conduct. But now, when she saw her unfortunate husband prostrated with that fell malady which makes havoc of the brightest, most transcendent intellects, what was she to do? Which way was she to turn for the best? To whose counsels

was it safe to lend a willing ear? Where might she expect to find anything better than machinations, hollowness, treachery? What wonder if she was induced to put her trust and confidence in Pitt and Dr. Willis, the physician, whom Pitt had summoned to attend his royal master. The friends of the king and of Pitt's administration naturally clung to every word of hope which escaped the lips of Willis, who was loudly decried by the friends of the Prince of Wales. Sir Sydney Smith, in a letter to Lord Auckland, spoke of "the opposition physicians" as being so clamorous in endeavouring to shake confidence in Willis that the public had become "strangely divided in doubts, hopes and fears." And party spirit, leaving the precincts of the court, soon affected the entire nation. Scandal became busy with the characters both of the queen and of Pitt. "You will see in the opposition papers," wrote William Grenville to Lord Buckingham, "that they are beginning to abuse the queen in the most open and scandalous manner."* A bill for conferring the powers of regent upon the Prince of Wales, and empowering him to dissolve the administration, had been introduced into the House of Commons, and on the 12th of February, 1789, reached its final stage. The day upon which it was to undergo the third reading in the Upper Chamber drew nigh. Hilarious were the spirits of all members of the opposition at the bright prospect before them. Places, pensions, all those good things which are the rewards of genuine and disinterested patriotism, and the glory of them, came into view like some beatific vision. Dulness and tergiversation were kissing each other. Expectation was approaching its climax when the king's lunacy began to subside. He got better and better, and on the 10th of March the court physicians made their *congé*. The knavish tricks of the opposition were confounded. That night London was the scene of an illumination which was absolutely unprecedented within the memory of its oldest inhabitant. From the northern heights of Highgate and Hampstead to the remotest boundary of the Surrey hills one unclouded blaze of living light met the view. Dr. Moore, the then Archbishop of Canterbury, gazed with wonder on the impressive scene from the windows of the ancient halls of Lambeth Palace.†

* "Buckingham Papers," ii., p. 68.

† "Auckland Correspondence," ii., 301.

"London," wrote Sir Nathaniel Wraxall, years afterwards, "displayed light from one extremity to the other ; the illuminations extending without any metaphor from Hampstead and Highgate to Clapham, and even as far as Tooting, while the vast distance between Greenwich and Kensington presented the same dazzling appearance. The poorest mechanics contributed their proportion, and instances were exhibited of cobblers' stalls decorated with one or two farthing candles." * On the 23rd of the following month the king and all the Royal Family attended a general thanksgiving service beneath the dome of the metropolitan cathedral. Business was entirely suspended. Flags and banners waved in all directions. The city was delirious with joy. A magnificent choir of five thousand voices accompanied the organ as it thundered the majestic strains of the Hallelujah chorus beneath the stately dome of St. Paul's. No wonder the poor old monarch wept, and, turning to Dr. Tomline, the Bishop of Lincoln, who stood by, said, "I now feel that I have been ill."†

Not long after the king had become insane, Europe was thrown into a panic by that awful event which is known as the French Revolution, when, as Coleridge has well expressed it :

"France in her wrath her giant limbs upreared
And with that oath which smote air, earth, and sea,
Stamped her strong foot and said she would be free."

At last the inexorable hour had struck. At last the match had been applied to the train of the gunpowder. At last the evil magicians of the times had done their work. This was their hour and the hour of darkness. Robespierre and his infamous associates appeared on the scene. The throne was precipitated and the flames of anarchy were kindled on its site. Twice in twelve months did one of the fairest of European cities witness the sickening spectacle of a regicide, and its streets running red with the blood of the slain. Such an unparalleled series of events was watched with profound interest in all countries by men of deep and passionate feelings. Nowhere was their progress watched more closely than in England. To the majority of people the Revolution seemed an angry fiend, whose advent had

* "Memoirs," iii., pp. 369-70.

† Tomline, "Life of Pitt," 3rd ed., ii., 488.

been predicted by the exile of Patmos and a long succession of apostles and prophets of the church ; while to not a few great and good men it seemed to be the uprooter of evil and the harbinger of good things to come. Wordsworth, on the tip-toe of expectation, expressed in verse the feelings of this courageous band :

“ Oh, pleasant exercise of hope and joy !
 For mighty were the auxiliars which then stood
 Upon our side, we who were strong in love !
 Bliss was in that dawn to be alive,
 But to be young was very heaven ! Oh times,
 In which the meagre, stale, forbidding ways
 Of custom, law, and statute, took at once
 The attraction of a country in romance !
 When Reason seemed the most to assert her rights,
 When most intent on making of herself
 A prime enchantress—to assist the work,
 Which then was going forward in her name.”*

Both George the Third and Queen Charlotte were much concerned at the character of the Revolution, and from 1789 onwards regarded the throne as anything but secure. Thomas Paine, who was greatly influenced by the Revolution, published his “ Rights of Man,” in answer to Burke, in 1792, and the book being widely read in England, imbued many with the revolutionary doctrines. But despite this the English throne was secure, and so were its occupants. The ensuing years, however, were more eventful in the history of Europe than they were in the royal life which we are specially considering. Those years beheld the termination of the long and tedious trial of Warren Hastings ; the cruel executions of Louis XVI. and Marie Antoinette, which signalized the triumph of Republicanism ; the rupture between Burke and Fox ; the outbreak of hostilities between England and France ; costly and needless expeditions, which were partially redeemed on the ocean by brilliant engagements like those of Howe and Jervis, and gallant actions like those of Nelson and Pellew ; the partition of Poland ; the demolition of old alliances ; all the thrones of the Continent shaken by the genius of revolutionary France. Europe had never seen ten such years of convulsion

* “ Poems of the Imagination.” The Revolution as it appeared to its enthusiasts at its commencement.

and dismay. England had never known ten such years of anxiety and distress. In the ashes of one revolution were living the germs of another. The expense, the heartburning and the rankling dissatisfaction of the Revolution were followed by a war more oppressive in its burdens and more unsatisfactory in its results. Marvellous achievements were performed from time to time by English admirals and English captains. The triumph of Nelson at Bastia was succeeded by that of Sydney Smith at Toulon, and that again by others which equally maintained the honour of England's bulwarks. Never were the debates of the legislative assembly more fiery. Never were questions of greater constitutional or diplomatic moment more eagerly contested. The eighteenth century closed amidst the throes of the Irish rebellion. The nineteenth century dawned on the union of Great Britain and Ireland. The king remained tolerably sane until the year 1811. In the month of October, however, his dejection was worse than it had ever been. A Regency now became an imperative necessity. A bill to that end was accordingly introduced into Parliament by the ministry of which Spencer Perceval was the head—Pitt, the statesman that was dearest to the royal heart, having died five years before. The Regency Bill constituted the Prince of Wales regent of the realm, under certain restrictive provisions, which were to cease at the end of a year. To Charlotte was committed the care of her husband, and the disposition of the royal household. The prince was empowered to grant peerages only for services that had been rendered to the army and navy. On the 5th of February, 1811, the Regency Bill was presented by the Lord Chancellor to the king, who, with a melancholy countenance, expressed his assent to its proposals.

Thus the Regency of George, Prince of Wales, was initiated, and who is there who is so ignorant as not to know how much is summed up in it? For more than nine years that Regency lasted, and it is not going too far to say that it is a period of our history which finds its parallel only in the reign of Charles the Second. Midnight banquets, from which the guests were carried away speechlessly drunk—gambling tables from which miners who had sat down in opulence rose up in indigence—balls and assemblies graced by the presence of notorious demi-reps and courtezans—such were the features of this epoch. Nor should it

be forgotten that it was during this reign that foppery reached its nadir. Beau Brummel, an impudent coxcomb, arrogated to himself the functions of arbiter of fashion, and constituted himself an oracle from which no appeal could lie. No sooner did he pronounce an opinion than that opinion became law, and woe betide the luckless wights who what time they heard the sound of the lute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer and all kinds of music, refused to bow down and worship the golden image which Nebuchadnezzar, the king, had set up.

In 1795, the Prince Regent, in order to extricate himself from debt, agreed to accept in marriage the hand of Caroline of Brunswick. Ten years previously he had been secretly wedded to the beautiful Mrs. Fitzherbert. But this secret had oozed out, as secrets will, and the public had never forgiven the insult to the national faith, for Mrs. Fitzherbert was a Papist. The Gordon riots, which in 1780 had nearly laid the town in ashes, had plainly demonstrated the temper of the popular mind in respect of Popery, and yet in the face of this the Regent had the assurance to force a Catholic lady, who was, it is only just to say, infinitely better than her creed, into marrying him. It redounds to the credit of Queen Charlotte that throughout life she treated Mrs. Fitzherbert as a daughter, and groaned in spirit at the disgusting way in which she was treated by the prince. It was mainly through the interest of Queen Charlotte and the Duke of York that this excellent lady received an annuity of six thousand pounds.

In April, 1795, the Regent formally married the hapless Princess Caroline of Brunswick, at the Chapel Royal in St. James's Palace. That the prince was averse from the marriage was well known, but the ceremony, notwithstanding, was performed. His Royal Highness' dejection was only too apparent, and had he not kept his spirits up by pouring spirits down there is no saying what might have happened. Long afterwards Caroline asserted that her husband was dead drunk the best part of the wedding night, which in all probability was the case. The birth of their only child occurred in the following year. This child was known as the Princess Charlotte, and instead of healing the differences which existed between her parents, only made matters worse. In May, 1796, all marital regard finally disappeared. Husband and wife now regarded one another with

mutual aversion. The queen, it was said, encouraged her eldest son in the part he played, and manifested her contempt too openly for her hapless daughter-in-law. To what extent these allegations can be said to be true, it is difficult to say. Probably the queen was induced to lend too willing an ear to the representations of some of Caroline's enemies, who, after the committee appointed for investigating her character in 1805, became exceedingly numerous. At last, goaded beyond endurance by the insults which were repeatedly heaped on her by the prince and by some of his disreputable lady friends, Caroline determined to seek peace and comfort on the Continent. Contrary to the strong representations of her best friends she left England in 1814, with the view of travelling in Italy and Greece, and Queen Charlotte never set eyes on her again. Possibly she concurred in the belief that in the circumstances it was extremely desirable that her daughter-in-law should be away from England, and from the charmed precincts of the court of England. Be that as it may, we do not hear that she ever expressed any interest in her welfare, or any wish that she should take up her abode with her husband and seek a reconciliation. Her only child, the Princess Charlotte, died in 1817, but even this sad event did not bring her grief-stricken mother to England. Nor did the death of Charlotte in the following year have any effect on her chequered fortunes.

In the interim it had been discovered that it was an utter improbability that the king would ever again be sane.* Yet most exemplary was the behaviour of Charlotte in these trying circumstances. All that was exacted of her, she performed. How distasteful her appearances in public must at times have been only she herself could say. Still, wherever duty called her, thither she went. So late as 1816, when seventy-three years of age, she attended Ascot races, with three of her daughters and her niece, the Princess Sophia of Gloucester. During the course of the following year Charlotte gratified the scholars of Eton College by attending their ancient Montem, and by giving a *fête* in her private gardens at Frogmore in their honour on the following day. In the month of April, 1818, she was present at the wedding of the daughter whom she loved so dearly, the Princess

* Twiss's "Life of Eldon," ii., 197.

Elizabeth, who gave her hand to the hereditary Prince of Hesse-Homburg. Rush, minister plenipotentiary from the United States, who witnessed this ceremony, says that the queen went the rounds of the company, speaking to all. "There was a kindness in her manner," he says, "from which time had struck away useless forms. No one did she omit. Around her neck hung a miniature portrait of the king. He was absent, scathed by the hand of Heaven." Hardly had half a year elapsed from the celebration of these nuptials than the queen received the solemn summons which no one can disobey. Death, who knocks with equal foot at the door of the royal palace and the cottage of the hind, prostrated her. She had suffered much for some years past, but in November, 1818, it became apparent that the royal sufferer was fast breaking up. The 17th of November dawned. The queen having been placed in her easy-chair, her children gathered affectionately round her to receive the last pressure of their mother's hand. As she held the palm of her wayward son, the Prince Regent, one sweet smile stole over her countenance. In another instant the gentle spirit had fled, "to where beyond these voices there is peace."

Genuine sorrow affected the inhabitants of London, and, indeed, it would not be going too far to say, affected the whole empire, when, far and near, in solemn tones, from the belfries of the churches, it was proclaimed that the king was a widower. In the universal sorrow the queen's venial political offences were freely forgiven. Slander held its tongue. The press ceased its libels. Rival politicians forgot to quarrel.

On the 2nd of December, a dark, dreary, winter's day, half London went out to see the funeral ceremony. From Kew Palace, the coffin was borne to Windsor and interred by torch-light the same night in St. George's Chapel, with all the boast of heraldry and pomp of power. The king was absent. He did not know, nor was he to know, that his wife was dead. Yet a few more months and that same vault in Windsor's nave opened its ponderous jaws once more to receive all that was mortal of George, King of England, who after suffering more than the tongue could tell or the pen recite, the august sufferer had succumbed on the 29th of January, 1820, to partake of that rest which remaineth for the people of God.

This is hardly the place for a detailed character of Charlotte

From what we have said, most of our readers will be able to deduce some estimate of her character for themselves. That she was not before her age is undeniable, but then nobody can be blamed for not being before their age. We live in an age when much nonsense is talked about queens and their duties to their subjects. Queens, after all, are only women, and are not exempt from the infirmities which are incidental to human nature. Tried even by the severest standard, Charlotte's character will bear the closest scrutiny. No amount of what has been called "dry light," no amount of searching into the archives of the past, will make Charlotte's character different from what it was. It is no disrespect to her memory to say that she never rose above mediocrity, and that she was quite a cipher in the political world. At the same time, it must not be forgotten that she had a very trying position to fill at a very critical period of the national history; that she succeeded in maintaining that position, where many others similarly situated would have come to grief, and that she had in a pre-eminent degree the satisfaction of having conscientiously striven to do her best, which, after all, is the highest success to which any queen can aspire.

WILLIAM CONNOR SYDNEY.

My "Bureau de Crime."

By EDITH STEWART DREWRY,
Author of "ON DANGEROUS GROUND," "ONLY AN ACTRESS," etc.

EUREKA! "I have found it." The way to make a lot of money, even in these hard times. It is an inspiration—my idea, I mean—nothing less, although I will frankly admit that, whilst the brilliant idea itself sprang into life *per saltum*, it has been led up to by a long and careful observation of human nature and its legion of problems. One or more of these it is which has evoked my Eureka.

A *Bureau de Crime*! One always puts these sort of things in French, you know; doesn't look quite so ugly as in English. One likes to be wicked, but not to be called names. Well, then, my place shall not be a "Criminal Agency"—oh dear, no!—but a *Bureau de Crime*, where an experienced novelist may always be consulted as to the plotting and entire arrangements of crime, contemplated by perpetrators of the better kind, "who so constantly court detection by the omission of some detail which a professional plottist would have arranged for satisfactorily."

N.B. That is from my prospectus, you understand.

Doubtless, two disagreeable factors to be reckoned with in my very original scheme will at once suggest themselves to any well-brought-up citizen, viz.: the law and the said novelist's conscience.

The first would have to be hoodwinked somehow; that is my very object. The second—well, it is nothing new for one to sit upon poor knocked-about conscience, is it? So we'll put these objections of yours out of court as weaknesses, and suppose the above concern to flourish—as do the wicked—like a green bay tree. By the bye, *that* would be a splendid name for me, and plain English too: "The Green Bay Tree Agency;" quite pretty, and rurally innocent (only rurals are not a whit more innocent than we urbans).

Now the especial problem on which I base the idea of my

G. B. T. Agency is this. I have always been struck by the extraordinary, nay, fatuously stupid errors almost always committed in their crimes by offenders *not* of the criminal class born and bred, and I have often thought—jesting apart—that many such better-class criminals would never have committed the very mistakes which, in many instances, have led to their detection, if they could have consulted some experienced plot-constructor. I fully grant the difference between theory and practice in the science of criminal warfare, as in everything else ; between the cool-headed, disinterested plan of crime laid out by the strategist in the office, and its practical working out by the person interested, who is, of course, more or less swayed by whatever passion is the *raison d'être* of the crime, and therefore liable to be flurried or otherwise mentally disturbed, so that he loses perfect coolness.

I put the criminal classes proper out of court, because their whole position rests on a different basis. They are brutish, ignorant ; they care for nothing beyond keeping outside police range. There is no attempt to wear a mask, or pose as respectable. They suffer no shame or disgrace amongst their "pals," in or out of prison ; on the contrary, the boldest, most constant miscreant is so much the more a hero to his kind. He makes no ado over his burglaries or murders, whether the latter be committed to prevent capture, or occur in a drunken brawl, and, so long as he gets a good "swag" out of it all, he does not much mind the risk of punishment. Indeed, as to crimes less than murder, he reckons that he must pass so much of existence in the "stone-jug," but calculates that he is still the gainer.

Well, then, crime to the habitual criminal thus becomes, so to speak, a straightforward matter of course—his whole existence, and no nonsense or disguise about it ; he is simply a bird of prey, his one god "Loot" ; he has no other stake in the general polity, and therefore has nothing to lose, except, at times, in and out, his liberty, which it is either ignorance or a mere sentimental mistake to suppose he values very highly, *quod* liberty, as the educated and higher nature value freedom. What the criminal hates most about prison life is being cut off from drink, high feeding, and other coarse indulgence.

But when people of the better classes, with education and a status in the world, having, therefore, a greater moral responsibility,

descend into the region of crime, of course they have everything to lose by discovery ; their one aim is to gain the mercenary or other advantage of their deed, and yet still retain their repute amongst their social equals. It is to these better-class criminals, to whom crime is, more or less, the exception, not the rule, that crime is so dangerous, and needs such very careful planning. And this brings me back to my bureau, please, which we will suppose to be in full swing, and you and I are talking over things.

My first and very strongest advice to every client is "DON'T," backing it up with weighty reasons. I am quite safe in doing this, because when a man's (or woman's) evil passions are thoroughly roused and bent on gratification, all advice to forbear is precisely like pulling hard on the tail of the proverbial pig of Drogheda : the harder you pull, the more obstinately it rushes forward.

A lawyer may as well—as he often does—tell a litigant he has not a leg to stand on, and had better keep out of court. That man will be certain to fight to his last farthing.

Well, then, I say straight out, especially if it be with regard to a crime of violence, "My dear fellow, *don't*. The game is never worth the candle in these dangerous days."

Of course my client stares, and asks what the devil I mean ? So do you, perhaps, as that advice in connection with my bureau sounds rather like a paradox.

Well, I will answer you—mind, from a strictly cold-blooded, business point of view. Ethics are beside the question at present, because it goes without saying that crime is decidedly an ugly job for the soul, whatever be the gain in this life.

And, on this ground of policy alone, then, I assert that in far the majority of cases, crime, in the non-criminal class, does not pay because of the danger that in these days surrounds every step, and makes discovery at least a hundred chances to one against safety.

Firstly, then, the said criminal has relatives, friends, acquaintances, all more or less aware of his ways and means and movements. The victim or victims of his nefarious deed, ditto. Ergo, it is sure to be somebody's interest to notice and inquire into any unusual departure from accustomed ways in either party, if only from idle curiosity. A friendless nobody has much more immunity than his betters.

Again, directly a man commits a crime (especially if it be murder) he has to face the fact that, should the least trifle arouse suspicion, his hand is against every man's and every man's hand is against him. The Press, the public, are, as much as the law authorities, on the *qui vive* to aid in his detection; their varied motives are quite immaterial. The dangerous fact remains grimly in the foreground, that his one mind has to match itself against and *outwit* a legion of minds, many of them equal to his own, all either bent on, or ready to aid, the outwitting of his; and they are in cold blood, remember. Looking at the position in this way I do not think that it is possible for one brain (as a rule) to be capable of foreseeing and guarding against every contingency, fencing round every possible point of danger—not in these days, when the forces arrayed against that one offender have such enormous resources at command, a very network of machinery, which the least false step on the criminal's part may put in motion with results fatal to his safety. Why, fifty years ago, in fact and fiction, as one reads, crime was easy—plain sailing to what it is now with modern sciences and appliances. Don't I know too well, as a novelist, the trouble and difficulty of arranging my people's crimes and escapes? And fact is ten times worse of course; because, for instance, if I am desperate, I can bring along a veritable cyclone or a snow-storm, and break down telegraph wires till my hero or my villain is out of the country. But here, in real life, in this bureau, I can't arrange that matter so comfortably for my assassin-client; those horrid wires stick in their places—or there is a telephone, and it's ten to one that when he steps jauntily from the train at Dover to cross to Calais, he walks straight into the arms of a smiling detective, who is coolly waiting for him. Or it may be at New York that this happens; the wire precedes you all the same, and Mr. Byrne's officers will take care of you till their English *confrère* arrives. Electricity and steam, then, are enemies to our crimes, in fact and fiction; photography is another difficulty; the entire extradition treaty system another, and one of the deadliest. I must say, it is really too bad and inconsiderate of international law-makers that now there is scarcely a corner of the globe where one can set a creature down in peace to snap his fingers at any "bobby" in creation. Then there is the whole phalanx of those dreadful newspapers, and advertisements in

them and out of them ; and sometimes—if it can be done—a rough sketch of the suspected person is added. This last item among modern perils was the one which led to the detection of that most stupid of criminals—Lefroy, who murdered poor old Mr. Gold in the train, near Brighton, a few years ago. And this again brings me back to the premisses which led to the suggestion of my agency—the almost unaccountable stupidity, shortsightedness, and lack of common-sense shown in the records of crime by those who are otherwise no fools. It amounts to an absolute fatuity. Certainly it presents a problem in metaphysics which it is difficult to solve. It really seems as if the mind, directly it passes into the realm of crime, takes a curious twist or becomes purblind. I will give book for my remarks presently, and if cleverer heads than mine find my humble deductions all wrong (as may be perhaps), I cannot help it ; you must simply take my offered remarks for what they may be worth.

Well, then, in my opinion, foremost in this curious state of mind is that passion for the Diary, the manifestation of which is rather the rule than the exception in the records of various trials—notably, I may add, in divorce cases, breaches of promise, and commercial or other fraud cases. It is simple madness ever to commit to black and white any record of, or allusion to, anything nefarious, which, if found, is fatal evidence. You cannot get out of it, or twist it, or out-lie it. It is like a recurring decimal—you can't get rid of your own entry ; it comes back and back eternally, and pins you—self-incriminated. If your memory is so bad that you cannot remember an assignation, or what you have done, or intend doing, in the name of sense make up your mind, perforce, to live in safe respectability. Personally, I hold a diary of all one's thoughts, feelings, doings, &c., as a horror, and dangerous as a Palace of Truth itself, the world being what it is. I thoroughly endorse the Jesuit maxim, which I shall have put up in red letters in my bureau : " Write so that even if the letters should come into other hands they should not give offence."

Only a few words those, but they inclose volumes of common-sense and astute worldly wisdom that will bear a wide application.

I remember—in the early '80's, I think—a divorce case in which the parties were people of position. The wife was the respondent. She and the co-respondent strenuously denied guilt, fought hard, and yet with incredible folly she had actually

noted down in her diary every assignation with her paramour—date, place, name. Still more idiotically she had not destroyed this damnatory evidence directly she knew that suspicion was aroused. Of course, the diary was got hold of, and was mainly instrumental in convicting her. This is but one out of many instances in cases of various kinds. Another instance, still more incomprehensible, occurred recently in the case of a charge brought in the English courts against a man of position, for fraudulently appropriating trust money of some £20,000 value. Before a warrant was issued he went abroad secretly, but later, finding himself obliged to be in England, he returned, also secretly, but was, to his amazement, arrested on landing at Dover. Of course he was searched, and on him was found a diary, and in this book, each under its date, were entries, amongst others, which noted being at a certain hotel under a false name, with expressions of apprehension appended; another noting that on the boat a passenger had looked hard at him—"I hope he did not recognize me, but I fear he did," or words to that effect were added. Now, imagine any man presumably sane who, knowing himself to be under suspicion of a crime, in hourly dread of discovery and arrest, yet actually puts down in black and white such fatally compromising matter as this, and carries it about on his person, which, should he be arrested, he must know would immediately be searched. He did the very things which, according to the dictates of common-sense, he should have left undone. Is it that, in a certain strained state of mind and nerves, there is a morbid excitement which finds a curious and irresistible safety valve in thus expending itself on paper?

Akin to the above is another striking fact in the history of crime, viz., the way in which criminals so constantly keep in existence, sometimes deliberately, sometimes by neglecting to destroy, papers, documents, weapons, or other things which are fatally compromising. More than one forger, for instance, has been convicted mainly through the discovery of the sheets of paper on which he has practised the imitation of the forged handwriting. Or, where the illicit document was a will or deed, the real instrument has been found, when all common-sense and caution should have burned it. The fire—is my advice to my clients, and pulverize the ashes even then. In the famous Bidwell Bank of England forgery (about '74), the police found in

Austin Bidwell's lodgings, in St. James's Place, a blotting pad which had distinctly blotted most compromising writing. It is true that these really very clever criminals were at the last surprised through a small oversight, sufficiently curious in such cool-headed offenders, and I have little doubt that Austin intended to destroy every such evidence *before* the final absconding so neatly pre-arranged. But if Austin Bidwell had been in my bureau to be aided in his plans of safety, I should have said at once: "Don't keep for a minute a bit of blotting-paper that has once been used to blot a dangerous document. Burn it directly. Always burn blotting-paper so used, my worthy sir. And also carry in your memory the addresses of die-sinkers. Don't copy them down; don't cut them out of the directory [that is what the Bidwells did], unless you burn up your copy of it without delay."

These and one or two more apparently insignificant but really grave errors in detail of construction, proved to be among the most fatal flaws in a gigantic forgery, which, on the whole, stands nearly, if not quite, alone for the daring, the manifestation of business capability and patience in the working out, the admirable scientific construction and remarkable cleverness—up to a certain point—of the four men who formed the syndicate. The object was, at any rate, worth the risk from their platform, they being swindlers by trade, who had no credit or status to lose by failure.

But of all offenders, I do think those who most constantly fail in the ways I have mentioned—the offenders who certainly most need my professional aid—are the disciples of Cain. The records of murder are full of evidence that the assassin did, or left undone, precisely those things which he should have been most careful to do, or to avoid doing, as the case may be. Indeed, the well-laid plan and carefully guarded outposts are, in the great majority of cases, conspicuous by their absence, although murder is of all crimes that which most needs every possible safeguard, being the crime, of all others, most beset with perils from without and from within. From without, for reasons of which I have already spoken; from within, because it is, undoubtedly, calculated to upset the nerves and the normal conditions of the mind, and therefore to render the criminal unfit, in truth, to cope with the endless dangers surrounding him.

Take, for instance, the case I have alluded to by name—the Gold-Lefroy murder. It was too utterly stupid throughout to deserve anything but contempt. As a matter of fact, a railway carriage in England (in America, the open cars make any secret crime impossible) is the worst place for a murder—above all, a first-class compartment. The guard has an uncomfortably sharp knack of noticing the passengers during the journey; people look out of windows at the train rushing by and see into this coach or that; tickets are so easily traced, too, and pin you to time and place so objectionably. Then, a shabby, hangdog-looking fellow, such as Lefroy was, being in a first-class carriage was in itself noticeable, the more so as Mr. Gold was the only other passenger and was well known on the line. Then the struggle was seen for a moment from a cottage window, and at Preston (near Brighton) Lefroy was observed to leave the carriage, and it was noticed also that the old gentleman was no longer in the compartment. Even when, through the stupidity of the country official, the murderer got to his sister's house and thence escaped to London—having no money to enable him to get out of the country—neither of the two foolish people thought of destroying every photo of the man. The police naturally "went" for that at once, searching the house, and the photo of this rather peculiar-looking man mainly led to his capture, for the *Daily Telegraph* published from it a rough sketch, which Lefroy's landlady recognized, and in consequence gave information. He had not had the means to fly the country and was arrested. It never does, you see, to commit a murder without a good supply of money. I never advise it in my *Bureau de Crime*.

Another instance, yet worse, is that of the murder in Scotland of young Rose, by one Laurie, for here the latter literally flung away the advantages of time, place and circumstance. His deed was positively made to his hand to pass for an accident, and the "fool in his folly" took all the trouble in the world to prove it impossible for it to be anything but a murder of his committing. He got Mr. Rose to go for a walk over a mountain pass, on one side of which was a precipice. A man on another hill saw them near the fatal spot—and, by the way, I never advise high, open places for this sort of business; you never know from how great a distance you are seen. In a lonely spot Laurie pushed his vic-

tim over the precipice, and then descended it by a path to make sure of him and rob him. The fall was deep and steep enough to insure death. Laurie had only then, in the name of all sense, to go back to the inn, unconcernedly saying that Rose had gone on farther, they having parted, *pro tem.*, in the pass, and that Rose would be back presently; then quietly to steal the money in his friend's valise (no one knew what was in it), and when Rose failed to appear, evince natural friendly alarm. The body, when found, would tell no tales save of a fall over the precipice. However strong the moral suspicion or belief that the fall was not an accident, nothing could ever have convicted Laurie of murder. Of robbery he might have been convicted, but the law must have acquitted him on the capital charge. Instead of this, what did the fool do, in the hopes of hiding the body? He dragged it to some little distance, where the gorge opened near the beach, and built it over with boulders of rock, and, strangest of all, pulled off Rose's boots and left them unburied! Then he walked off to the inn, said Rose had gone on for a few days, and that night he (Laurie) went away, taking with him his friend's valise and the silver watch he had worn on his person. Conceive such folly throughout! It pales the very crime.

Of course, when poor Rose's friends missed him, the whole country side was searched, and after a week the body was found—a murder, unmistakably. A dead man could not bury himself. Laurie had got away, but even then, after three weeks, must needs hark back to the very neighbourhood of his crime, hiding about, till he was found and arrested and was finally convicted.

The "Wimbledon Murder"—the case of Dr. Lamson, who murdered his crippled young brother-in-law, is another instance in point of bad planning and worse execution. Primarily, it is nearly always an initial mistake to murder any person in whose death you are known to have an interest, whether that interest be pecuniary or be the result of jealousy, revenge, or any other motive. If there is the slightest reason to apprehend that the death was not "from natural causes," as the coroner's verdict puts it, suspicion very naturally directs itself to you, the gainer by that person's death. Some poisons can be used so as to produce the appearances of certain complaints, but even then, time, great care, and constant personal intercourse between victim and

poisoner are absolutely essential to success. The least error means suspicion, an inquest, *post mortem*, and probably detection of poison. In these days medical science knows too much, from the murderer's point of view, of course, and poison is, I consider, on the whole the most easily traced and most dangerous mode of killing. Lamson set about it, too, in a very stupid manner, although as a doctor he might account for the aconite being in his possession. But he actually sent the poor lad—his victim—poisoned chocolate drops, some of which the boy naturally bestowed on a chum, whose symptoms of sickness resembled those of the victim. Then, at the last, the murderer got impatient, desperate, and "hurried up" (a fatal error in crime), giving with his own hands, in some sugar, a dose so large and so ill calculated—as *he was in a hurry*—that it quickly produced in the boy violent symptoms of its presence. Result—failure of the scheme, arrest and hanging of the schemer.

In still further support of my remarks, I could mention many more cases, but space does not allow me. Perhaps I have already trespassed too far thereon. I think, however, that I have in some measure well supported the substance of my dicta: that, since crimes will go on as long as the world wags, my *Bureau de Crime* ought to be a grand success; that (my business interest apart) the very best advice I can give my would-be clients is emphatically: "Crime is too dangerous ever to be worth while; once for all—DON'T."

Into Temptation.

By A. PERRIN.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE BALL.

“—— comes the moment to decide,
In the strife with Truth and falsehood,
For the good and evil side.”—*Lowell*.

So Andrew departed into camp alone with a very bad grace, after arranging to encamp near the railway station the day we returned from Patwa, so that I should not have to drive into Kuttahpore and out again, to meet him.

I established myself with the Herrings, Sir Gerald and his belongings having arrived the day before.

Chatty was pleasant, companionable and good-tempered, and did her utmost to make me happy and comfortable. She would bring my tea to me in the mornings herself, and then get into my bed to “have a gabble,” as she expressed it, and never seemed so happy as when I allowed her to wait on me hand and foot.

Mrs. Herring, with much complaisance, would watch Chatty and Sir Gerald, with myself as a chaperone, go off for long strolls or drives together, quite convinced in her own mind that it now only rested with Chatty to bring Sir Gerald to her feet.

But the young lady was not of the same opinion, although she kept her ideas on the subject to herself when in her mother's presence.

“What's the good,” she asked me in private, “of telling ma I wouldn't have him if he *did* propose? I know he isn't going to, and, of course, if he doesn't, *I* can't help it, and ma can't be cross with me. But it would disappoint her awfully if I said I'd refuse him. Poor 'ole mar! She'll get over it, and then she must take to Vincent.”

“Then you really wouldn't have Sir Gerald, even if he *asked* you?” I inquired.

"Oh, don't imagine it's sour grapes," said Chatty laughing. "I wouldn't have him if he was a duke. I hate the sight of him, with his button-holes, and his shiny boots, and his fallals. He always looks as if he'd just come out of a bandbox."

"Indeed he doesn't," I could not help exclaiming.

Chatty roared with laughter.

"Oh, I knew I'd draw you," she said. "I tell you what, ma'am, it's a precious pity my lord doesn't go away."

"Chatty! You're most impertinent! How dare you say such things to me?"

"Oh, what did I say?" she inquired innocently.

I was rather disconcerted by this question, but maintained a dignified silence instead of answering.

Chatty's arms were round my neck in a moment.

"Don't be angry, old thing," she coaxed. "I was only teasing, and I promise I won't do it never no more. Sir Gerald's a beauty, and I'll accept him to-morrow if you like. Shall I?"

"You're a little goose," I replied. "Stop talking nonsense and help me with my gown for the ball."

I had decided to wear my white dress as I had nothing better, and with Chatty's help I altered the body, which was rather large for me, and twisted and turned the lace to a prettier way of falling, and made the most I could of it.

"How I wish I had a lovely white brocade," I said to Gerald the evening before the ball.

Dr. and Mrs. Herring had gone to see Mrs. Costello, who had eaten too much at the dinner-party and was still ill, and Chatty had disappeared into the house, leaving Gerald and myself wandering about the garden.

"I wish I could give it to you, dearest," he said regretfully; "if you were my wife, Josephine, *how* I would dress you. You always look nice in what you have, but you ought to be dressed in the richest things; you are so queenly, you would carry them off to perfection."

The words, "if you were my wife," brought the tears to my eyes. Oh, if only I were.

"Do you know," he went on, "sometimes I try to imagine what we would have done if we had met before—you know what I mean?"

I nodded my head.

“I would have taken you to Paris and to Vienna, and every place where life's worth living. I should like to set every city in Europe raving over your beauty. Don't you *know* how gloriously handsome you are?”

“Oh, don't laugh at me, Gerald,” I said piteously. “I know perfectly well that I'm a great awkward lump, and that my hands and feet are huge, and that my best friend couldn't call me pretty.”

I was perfectly sincere in what I said, and nothing was further from my thoughts than the idea of fishing for compliments.

“Of course, no one in his senses would call you *pretty*. It's much too feeble a term. Why, a woman with a face and figure like yours might do anything she liked in the world; you'd be the rage in London. And to think how you've thrown it all away. By God! It makes me sick to think of your being tied to that old brute.”

“Oh, Gerald, I can't let you say such things; remember he is my husband.”

“*Don't* I remember it every minute and second of my existence? Josephine, what on earth made you marry him?”

“Oh, I can't explain it all,” I said wearily; “I only know that I did it.”

“Tell me you wish you were free for *my* sake, my darling. I know you feel it, so why shouldn't you tell me? I do so long to hear you say it.”

“I can't. It would be like saying I wished him to die.”

“Very well, dear; I understand. Just think; we shall have the whole of to-morrow evening to ourselves at the ball, longer than we've ever had yet. I wish the old woman hadn't taken it into her head that I want to marry Chatty; she never gives us any peace.”

“You certainly wouldn't have been asked here if she *hadn't* got it into her head,” I said.

“Well, then, the Lord makes me truly thankful she has,” said Gerald; and presently we were called in by Chatty, to criticize her in her ball dress, which she had put on with all its additions in the way of gloves, fan and lace handkerchief, and was marching up and down the drawing-room admiring herself in a long mirror.

She looked nice, though rather coarse and loud, and would

have looked much better if she could have been persuaded to wear either black or white, but she was inexorable on the subject, and stuck valiantly to her pink silk, in spite of my assuring her that every girl wore white at her first ball.

"What do you know about it?" she asked good-humouredly; "you've never even been to a ball yourself, so I'm not going to listen to *you*; my pink silk is lovely, and I mean to wear it. I firmly believe you're afraid I shall look nicer than you, now aren't you?"

And Chatty emphasized her words by pulling my hair and making diabolical faces at me.

We left Kuttahpore the next morning in a barouche, which had been hired from a native for the occasion, and reached the railway station in time to catch the three o'clock train, arriving at Putwa shortly before seven in the evening.

We went straight to an hotel, where we found Mr. and Mrs. Argles and Mr. Cassell, who had come in the day before.

"Well, this is wonderful," said Mrs. Argles, accompanying Chatty and myself to the room she and I were to share. "How *did* you manage to come?"

"By train," I answered laughingly.

"It's going to be a splendid ball," she went on, "and the decorations are too lovely; I saw them this afternoon. Oh, *how* I shall enjoy myself. How delicious to live again after being dead and buried for a year."

Mrs. Argles waltzed off down the passage to her own room, and Chatty and I were soon deep in the mysteries of our toilet.

We had a long, narrow whitewashed apartment, with two beds occupying the middle, and only one looking-glass, which Chatty and I peered into over one another's shoulders by the light of a kerosine oil lamp hanging on the wall.

Chatty was in a state of wild excitement; she was continually losing something, and beseeching me to help her find it or she could not go to the ball at all; she almost cried when she burnt a piece of her hair off in the process of curling her fringe, and was quite angry with me because mine curled naturally, though I took the trouble to explain that I could not help it. She was not nearly ready when it was almost time to start, and made herself hot and breathless in her efforts to dress quickly; so that

when we stood together at the last moment in front of the looking-glass, I gazed at myself calm and cool without a hair out of place, while Chatty bobbed and ducked under my arms and over my shoulders, a heated mass of millinery and flurry.

At this moment, Mrs. Herring rustled in gorgeous in her best purple silk, smartened up by bows of yellow velvet, which looked as if they had dropped on to her by mistake, and overcome with admiration for her daughter's appearance.

"Darling child, you look lovely," she exclaimed fondly. "That pink is most becoming to her complexion, is it not, Mrs. Boscawen? You look nice yourself, my dear; but Chatty's colouring, with her dress and all that, makes you look rather like a ghost. However, I daresay there will be plenty of other people in white to keep you company; it's the most common colour in a ball-room."

Brimful of satisfaction and maternal pride, Mrs. Herring led the way to the hotel drawing-room, where we found Gerald waiting for us, and the Argles and Mr. Cassell, who were also ready to start.

Mrs. Argles was looking her best, and I was consumed with a desire to know if Gerald had been asking her for dances before I came in, for she was attentively examining her programme.

"There," grumbled Mr. Cassell, "I've split my glove, and it's the only pair I've got. What an unlucky devil I always am."

"Let's see," said Mrs. Argles consolingly; "there's time for me to mend it. Bob, go and get my little work-case, it's somewhere in our room."

Mr. Cassell's discontented expression gave way to one of beaming gratitude, and I have no doubt that the glove honoured by being mended by Mrs. Argles' pretty white fingers, found its place among the unhappy young man's most treasured possessions.

"Don't dance with any one but me to-night," said Gerald, in a low voice, as we made our way to the hired carriage waiting outside.

"But how about yourself?" I inquired somewhat suspiciously.

"Only two with Chatty," he answered, and I took my seat beside Mrs. Herring with a light heart, for he had not asked Mrs. Argles to give him any dances after all, and of course to engage

himself to Chatty was an unavoidable duty considering he was staying in the house.

I could hardly suppress a cry of delight when I entered the ball-room, the long polished floor, the lights, and pale pink decorations, and the beautiful dresses mingled with the gay uniforms all made it look like fairyland.

At first I was so dazzled and bewildered by these unaccustomed surroundings that I could hardly see, and allowed Mrs. Herring to introduce me to the principal hostess and a fat man in ordinary evening dress as if I was walking in my sleep. But by degrees my brain cleared, and sticking close to Mrs. Herring's heels, who was greeting various long-lost acquaintances, I began to look about me, and gradually noticed that people were staring at me, and whispering as I passed. I caught one or two remarks here and there, which I knew, from the speakers' faces, referred to myself.

"Who is she? where does she come from?" and I distinctly heard the fat man I have already mentioned say to a lady next him :

"She's a Mrs. Boscawen—civilian's wife ; ain't she magnificent?"

My face tingled with pleasure, and I looked up at Gerald for sympathy.

"They're all wondering who you are," he said delightedly, "You've taken them all by storm ; such lots of people are asking your name. How I wish I could tell them it was Lady Daintry."

And so did I with all my heart and soul, though I made no answer, and turned away to hide the longing and regret I was showing in my eyes.

Then the band struck up a dreamy swinging waltz, and Mrs. Herring, having seen Chatty carried off by a partner in uniform, whose red coat utterly killed the pink silk, took her place among the other chaperones and partnerless females who sat on a raised platform at the end of the room.

Two or three men were introduced to me by the fat man, who also pleaded for dances on his own account, while Gerald stood by fidgeting with impatience ; but I dismissed them all, saying I was not going to dance, and then Gerald and I strolled into a long cool corridor lighted by Chinese lanterns and fragrant with banks of flowers.

We sat down on a low couch in a corner where we were almost hidden by the leaves of a huge fan palm, and where we could just hear the band from the ball-room. We sat in silence for some minutes. I felt suddenly low-spirited and heavy-hearted, for I realized that this was the last time I should spend alone with Gerald, and that it was quickly flying even though it had hardly begun.

"I can't talk," I said desperately, "though I feel as if I had no end to say."

"We must make the most of this evening," he answered, taking my hand; "I mayn't see you alone again for goodness knows how long."

"You will never see me alone again," I answered sadly.

"What are you talking about?" he asked, trying to undo the button of my glove.

"I made up my mind ages ago that after this ball I would have nothing more to do with you."

"Josephine!"

"Yes, I really mean it. I know I've been very wicked, but it's been worth it. And now I'm going to begin again and leave it all behind me."

To my astonishment he only laughed.

"We'll see," he said. "Now let's leave that subject alone and enjoy ourselves. Just hark at that waltz. You must dance with me later on."

"I can't. I promised Andrew I wouldn't dance at all."

"Nonsense. Surely you won't stick at a little thing like that when ——"

"Oh, Gerald, don't say it," I cried sharply, for the words cut me like a knife.

"My darling, what did you think I was going to say?"

I felt suddenly relieved.

"What did you mean?" I asked quickly.

"I was going to say you surely need not feel bound to keep a promise like that when he systematically denies you everything to make your life worth living from pure motives of selfishness."

"Oh, Gerald, I'm so glad. I thought you were going to say something very cruel, though I know I deserve it."

"You need never be afraid of my saying anything cruel to

you," he answered. "I would as soon cut my own throat. D—!"

"Gerald, dear!"

"I beg your pardon. But look at these brutes coming to sit down by us. Now we shall have to go. What a nuisance."

I soon discovered by the snatches of conversation we could overhear, that it was Chatty and her partner who had chosen the retreat next to ours.

"Oh, my! isn't somebody telling crackers," shouted Chatty in answer to some extravagant assertion on the part of her cavalier.

"But 'pon my word," expostulated the youth, but was interrupted by Chatty, who told him "if he didn't shut up she'd box his ears," upon which followed some scuffling and stifled giggles.

"We'd better go," said Gerald impatiently. "I've got the next dance with that little idiot, and after that I must look for some quiet place where we can talk without being disturbed."

But fortune certainly did not favour us the first part of the evening, for when Gerald's dance with Chatty was over, and he brought her back to where Mrs. Herring and I were sitting, his would-be mother-in-law declared she needed refreshment, and requested him to take her to the tea and coffee room, which he did with a very bad grace. Once having got him securely into her clutches, he could not escape until several dances were over, and at last returned to me fuming with rage.

"The old devil!" he exclaimed, as we hurriedly left the ball-room; "she simply *wouldn't* let me go. Every time I tried to get away she introduced me to some confounded friend of hers, who wanted something to eat or drink, or else said she wanted more herself. I won't go near her again this evening."

We had some difficulty in finding a seat, and at last, when we did so, it was amongst a crowd of people.

Gerald was furious.

"There are too many people at this affair," he said crossly; "nobody can really enjoy themselves. There isn't dancing room in the ball-room, or standing room in the verandahs."

"Shall we try supper?" I suggested.

"Yes; we may as well have some; and make a rush for the best place afterwards."

But we found the supper-room a seething mass of struggling

humanity, and it was almost an impossibility to effect even an entrance, so we wandered off in hopes of discovering the solitude we both longed for.

This time we were in luck, and settled ourselves in a delightful nook, well away from any other seats, and secure from intrusion. We were sitting on a broad, low ottoman, with soft silk cushions at our backs, the only light being from some large fairy lamps buried amongst the leaves and plants around us.

"I wonder how soon you'll forget me when I'm gone, Josephine?" he said, leaning forward and looking into my eyes.

"I wish there was a chance of my forgetting you altogether," I said bitterly.

"My poor darling," he said pityingly, "how shall I ever be able to leave you to this awful existence? Oh, darling! if I didn't love you too much, I would ask you to leave it all and come away with me."

"Oh, Gerald," I gasped, "I only wish I could."

He started slightly, and sat in silence for a few minutes, apparently thinking deeply.

"*Would* you come?" he asked in a whisper.

For fully five minutes I sat without speaking, while he waited, never moving his eyes from my face.

I fought out a desperate struggle with myself in that short space of time, and I never realized till afterwards what I went through. How I struggled with the longing that brought the word "yes" to my lips, and how dozens of times I choked it back. Why should I not go away and be happy with Gerald? Who, except himself, cared what I did, or what became of me? And then, above all the surging thoughts, one little sentence throbbed through my brain—"be a brave woman, do what you *know* is right, and you'll never repent it;" though who had said it, and where I had heard it, I could not remember, and did not care.

I tried to speak, for I knew that if I waited any longer the temptation would prove too much for me, and I should say the word he was waiting to hear. I dared not look at him; I dared not touch the hand he was holding out. My temples throbbed as if they would burst, and my eyes felt dry and burning. There was a choking lump in my throat, but speak I must . . . and say *no*.

"Oh! *here* you are," cried a familiar voice, and Chatty's face burst through the screen of leaves in front of us, her hair in wild disorder, and her dress in a state of dilapidation.

"You nasty thing, Sir Gerald. You never came near me for our second dance; and now ma wants to go home. *Isn't* it a bother?"

"Are you going?" I asked helplessly, feeling inclined to burst into hysterical laughter.

"Yes," said Chatty in a resigned voice. "I'm awfully sorry, but perhaps it's just as well. I've burst one of my shoes, and my heel's come off the other, and as for my dress it's simply dropping off my back, so I couldn't dance any more even if we stayed."

"Where is your mother?" I asked rising.

"In the cloak-room. Do come quick; she's in such a rage. You'll catch it, because she thinks it was your fault Sir Gerald didn't come for my dance."

But Mrs. Herring's indignation had no effect whatever on me. She could not say much in the cloak-room as other ladies were present, but when she got Chatty and myself back to the hotel and safely into our bedroom, she poured forth the vials of her wrath, until Chatty interfered and told her mother bluntly that my doings were no business of hers, and that she would go back to England to-morrow if she did not stop at once and leave us to go to bed in peace.

CHAPTER XXVI.

LEFT LAMENTING.

"Farewell!

For in that word—that fatal word—howe'er

We promise, hope, believe,—there breathes despair."

THERE was no sleep for me that night. I tossed and turned, wondering when I should see Gerald alone again, and how he would meet me the following morning. I was dreading that he would repeat the question he had asked me by the light of the fairy lamps the evening before, though I knew I should feel wretched if he said nothing more on the subject.

I tried to make up my mind to treat him with such marked coldness and indifference as would lead to his departure from

Kuttahpore, but at the same time I very much doubted whether it would have the desired effect, and was not at all sure that I could keep it up if he refused to go, or simply derided my attempts to send him away.

I was thankful when the morning came, for we were leaving by an early train, and had to be up in good time.

I woke Chatty, who was lying on her back snoring with astonishing violence, and we dressed hurriedly by lamp light. She was very sleepy and rather cross, so directly I was ready I left her to herself, meaning to go to the dining-room for a cup of tea.

Just as I shut the bedroom door behind me, a letter was put into my hand. I tore it open with trembling fingers for something told me it was Gerald's handwriting. I took in the contents at a glance, and then my head swam, and I leant against the wall for support.

He was going away. He had gone! And perhaps I should never see him again as long as I lived.

On going to his room after the ball, he had found a telegram which had been forwarded from Kuttahpore, summoning him home to his mother, who was not expected to live another month, and to enable him to catch the next mail steamer he had been obliged to leave at once, just catching the train between four and five a.m. ". . . . It breaks my heart to leave you without another word," he wrote; "but I dare not delay. It would make a difference of another week, and for all I know it may be a matter of life and death. I am scribbling these few lines in desperate haste, but if I do not write to you now, I shall not be able to say anything of what I feel, as you will have no chance of receiving letters privately. Take care of yourself, my darling, for my sake—for both our sakes, and do not forget me. I only pray that we may meet again before long, and *then*——"

There was no signature, and the writing bore traces of great haste, and as I read it, my first thoughts were for Gerald himself. Poor fellow, how dreadful for him if his mother died, for I knew he loved her dearly, and what terrible suspense and uncertainty he would go through during the long journey home before he could reach her side.

Gerald's mother! How sweet and good she must be. I could imagine her with his eyes, and the same tall, gracious figure, and

I felt more than thankful that I had overcome my temptation the night before, and saved Gerald from going to his mother with dishonour and disgrace hanging over the good old name.

I felt dumbly resigned to my own fate. It was no good to kick against the pricks any longer, and I should have to accept my life as it came, without thought of what might have been, or struggle after anything different.

In a great measure my unhappiness was my own fault. I had taken no advantage of my education, and therefore I had few, if any, resources in myself. Discontent had been at the root of all my troubles, and I had done Andrew as great a wrong in marrying him for what he could give me, as I had done myself.

The only course open to me in which I could recover my self-respect, was to go back to my husband with a determination to forego my youth and the pleasures I had craved for, and do my duty better in the future than I had ever attempted to in the past. I must try to please Andrew in thought now, as well as in deed.

Mrs. Herring had also received a note from Gerald, and with my own safely within my pocket, I said nothing about it, and heard the contents of hers with a proper amount of surprise and conjecture.

"I feel I was a little hasty with you last night," she said, as we stood in the dining-room waiting for Chatty. "I'm afraid there is no doubt that Chatty refused him, poor young man, and naturally he sought your company after such a blow, knowing no one else in the room. Such a nice note he wrote me, saying how *sorry* he was, and asking me to have his things at Kuttahpore forwarded to his agents. I'm sure he received no telegram at all. It was only an excuse to get away and not see Chatty again."

"Perhaps," I murmured, relieved beyond measure that she had chosen to take this view of the case, for now she would forego the complaints she had threatened to make of me to Andrew. Chatty received the news of Gerald's departure with unconcealed satisfaction.

"I'm very glad he's gone," she announced with her usual candour, as we took our seats in the train, "and I hope I shall never see him again."

"Oh, Chatty, be content with sending the poor man away like this, and don't speak ill of him behind his back," said Mrs.

Herring, who was struggling manfully to conceal her mortification and disappointment. "But I do wish he had consulted me before going off in such a hurry."

"Good gracious, ma! You wouldn't have cured his mother for him," exclaimed Chatty.

"Ah! but I'm pretty certain his mother had nothing to do with it," said Mrs. Herring, shaking her head mysteriously.

"Who had, then?" asked Chatty sharply.

"My darling, if *you* don't know, I wonder who does?"

"Oh, ma, what *have* you got into your head now?" said Chatty, giving me a surreptitious kick. "I wish you'd talk sense. I never was any good at double acrostics."

The young lady buried her head in a book and took no further notice of her mother, who sighed pathetically, and really looked so miserable that I felt quite sorry for her.

We were a most unsociable trio that morning; my head and heart were full of Gerald, and Mrs. Herring was silently occupied in regretting the brilliant "chance" that Chatty had so foolishly thrown away, while her daughter was apparently deeply interested in her book, and only laid it down when we got out at the station, where the barouche was waiting for the Herrings and our own wagonette for me.

I was very glad Andrew had not come to meet me, and was not sorry to find that I had a drive of nearly four miles in prospect before reaching the place where he was encamped, as it gave me time to pull myself together and think quietly over the future.

"Well, Andrew, how are you?" I asked as we entered the tent together on my arrival; "you are looking much better."

I told him of Sir Gerald's departure, and as much about the ball as I thought would interest him, also assuring him, in reply to his inquiries, that I had not danced once.

"Did that fellow propose to Miss Herring?" he asked.

"Not that I know of," I answered cautiously, "but Mrs. Herring seemed to think he had, and that her refusal was the real reason of his going off so suddenly."

"Ah, very likely," said Andrew; "she generally hits the right nail on the head. A very shrewd woman is Mrs. Herring. Her knowledge of human nature is marvellous. I wish you were a little more like her, Josie, my dear; but that could hardly be expected; she's one woman in a thousand."

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE DUST-STORM.

"The land of darkness and the shadow of death."—2 *Kings*, x., 21.

"BREAKFAST is ready, Andrew," I shouted. "Do make haste."

It was a hideously hot morning in April, nearly ten weeks after I had rejoined Andrew in camp, and I was sitting idly by the table on which breakfast was laid, waiting for my husband to come in.

He was outside the tent questioning some villagers who had arrived in a body to present a petition, and it struck me that it was rather rash of him to stay out so long in the sun, even though he was wearing a pith hat, for it was nearly twelve o'clock in the day, and the heat was intense.

I went to the door and called him again, telling him he ought to be careful of the sun, but he waved me back impatiently, saying he was coming presently, so I returned to my seat to wait for him.

For the last two months and more we had marched monotonously about the district, with nothing to mark the long weary days, as each one passed exactly like its uneventful predecessor.

We had seen nobody, not even Mr. Pierce, who had important work elsewhere in the district, and also a great deal to do in Kuttahpore itself. Mechanically I had carried out Andrew's wishes in every detail during this tedious interminable time; I had haggled energetically over every payment that had to be made, sewed, patched and darned his clothes and my own, and made no complaints or requests for a different state of affairs, as I had sometimes done in the days before I met Gerald.

All this delighted Andrew immensely; he noticed the change, and informed me that I had improved very much, and that he was glad I had come round to his ways of thinking; and confidently asserted that he had always felt sure, even when I had seemed most inclined to be frivolous, that his judgment could not have played him false when it had prompted him to make me his wife.

And now it was becoming uncomfortably hot, and I longed to

exchange the close, stuffy tents for our large airy house. The past fortnight had been almost unbearable with all its miseries of stifling heat, burning wind and dust by day, and maddening clouds of mosquitos by night. But whenever I had broached the subject to Andrew of returning to Kuttahpore, he had only seemed obstinately determined to stay out in camp so long as it was barely possible to exist in tents.

I not only wished to return to the station for the sake of getting into a cool house, but I also longed to see Chatty Herring, from whom I might possibly hear something of Gerald, for even if he had not written to them himself, Mrs. Herring might have had news of him from "her sister Eliza."

I knew perfectly well that Andrew would never hear of my writing to Douglas Daintry; besides I did not know where he was, as I had seen in the paper that he had taken six months' leave just after the Patwa ball, and no doubt had been sent for, like Gerald, to go home.

Sometimes I had half expected Gerald would write to me himself, but when I considered the matter calmly I came to the conclusion that he could not very well do so without causing a good deal of surprise to Andrew, and perhaps arousing his suspicion, for he had merely regarded Gerald as the most casual acquaintance so far as I was concerned.

No, he could not very well write to me himself, but I felt that he would very likely try to correspond with the Herrings, knowing I should hear of him through this medium.

"Poof! You were right about the sun, Josie," said Andrew, when he at last came in, hot and exhausted from his conference outside, "but I really couldn't allow those fellows to go till they had thoroughly taken in my meaning. They're so confoundedly stupid in this part of the world."

He threw himself wearily into his chair, and passed his hand over his forehead. I noticed that he looked flushed and tired, and thought it would be a good opportunity when he was actually feeling the heat, to urge him to go into the station at once instead of waiting another week, as I knew he intended doing.

"Can't you eat any breakfast, Andrew?" I asked, as he sent his plate away without tasting what was on it.

"No," he replied fretfully, "I've no appetite this morning, and I've got a bad headache; I think I must have some soda water."

"Don't you think, as we're only ten miles from Kuttahpore, we'd better go straight in to-morrow?" I suggested. "I'm sure the heat is knocking you up."

"Not at all," he answered; "I've only got a headache from standing out so long in the sun. I never go into the station till I can't help myself, and I don't mean to alter my rules this year more than any other. Besides, there is a great deal that wants attending to just about here."

"But really, Andrew, this sort of weather in tents is simply unbearable. I can't sleep for the heat or eat for the flies."

"My dear Josie, you're mistaken. You would find it even hotter in the station. The heat is not at all unbearable, and of course I shall take you in directly it becomes seriously hot."

Andrew shut his mouth with a snap, which was a signal that further remonstrance was useless, so I went on with my breakfast in silence, while my husband fidgeted restlessly in his chair and now and then fanned himself with his table napkin, though nothing would induce him to own that he felt hotter than usual.

However, when the breakfast things had been cleared away, he did not settle to his work, but walked up and down the tent, sitting on each chair in succession, and seeming very restless and out of sorts, which was no wonder, for the heat was appalling.

I myself could do nothing but lean back in my hard, uncomfortable chair, with only just enough energy left in me to flick away the flies that settled persistently on my face.

The air grew hotter and hotter, and Andrew's complexion assumed the colour of a brick.

"I think we're going to have a storm," he gasped; "it's hotter than it ought to be."

"Andrew," I implored, "you're *not* well; you can't say you are. *Do* make arrangements to go into the station."

I felt almost on the verge of tears, and a strange leaden presentiment took possession of me for which I could not account. But indeed it seemed as if something unusual must be going to happen, for the wind suddenly ceased, and there was an ominous calm in the air, while the patch of sky visible through the tent door looked scorched and burnt to a livid metallic hue.

There was a singular absence of all sound. No murmuring of servants' voices, not a bird's cry, nor so much as the bark of a dog from the village near. Every thing living seemed to be in

hiding, only some huge brown kites turned and wheeled silently in the air.

The stillness was suffocating, and I looked at Andrew in alarm.

"What is going to happen?" I cried. I had never seen the signs of an approaching dust storm before.

Andrew was sitting forward in his chair, with his lips parted, and his face flushed to a deep dull red. He was certainly feeling the heat very severely, as well he might, for in the last few minutes it had increased a hundred-fold.

However, he still would not own it, and scarcely answered me when I asked him rather anxiously if his head was worse.

Feeling as if I could hardly breathe, I rose to go to the tent door, when something odd in his expression made me turn towards him instead, and as I did so he stretched out his arms with a sudden desperate movement and called my name twice. Then he fell forward like a log, and lay senseless on his face at my feet.

For one second I stood, hardly able to move, looking at the figure on the ground, while a slow grumbling sound rose on the heated atmosphere, and the air grew dark with a dense volume of copper-coloured dust.

Then I knelt down by my husband's side, and, putting my arms round him, I exerted all my strength and turned him over. His breath was coming in slow, noisy puffs, and there was a little froth on the corners of his mouth; his eyes were open, but looked dull and glassy, and his hands, when I felt them, were deadly cold.

I called aloud for the servants, but they had all taken refuge in the kitchen tent from the storm, and no one heard me. The air grew almost quite dark, and the wind rose shrieking and screaming with mad fury, whirling the thick masses of dust about and flinging them down on to the tent, shaking it with such violence that every moment I expected the poles to fall. I sat trembling on the ground, with Andrew's head in my lap, peering through the gloom at his face, which had so strangely altered in a few short minutes.

I groped with one hand for the table, which was close to me, and, pulling off the cloth, I rolled it into a bundle and placed it under Andrew's head, and then I rose and went out into the blinding dust to find somebody to help me. I could hardly see two yards ahead. Leaves and little pieces of stick and stone

struck me in the face, and the wind nearly lifted me off my feet ; still I groped on, with my hands stretched out, calling for the servants with all my strength.

At last to my relief I heard an answering shout, and presently saw the figure of old Nazuf Ali struggling through the turmoil of dust and wind.

"Come quickly !" I screamed ; "run ! run !"

I turned back to the tent, and as I did so the air began to clear a little, and a large drop of rain fell on to my bare head.

I found Andrew as I had left him, the thick snoring sound still issuing from his lips, and with Nazuf Ali's help I loosened his clothes and bathed his head and face with water. We tried to force some whisky down his throat, but his teeth were tightly clenched, and it only ran out at the corners of his mouth.

I sat in terror and perplexity, with Andrew's head resting against my shoulder like a lump of lead, as the other servants dropped in one by one and stood looking on with awe-stricken faces while Nazuf Ali alternately rubbed his master's hands and feet, and implored him to speak to him, or "wake up."

There seemed no sign of his regaining consciousness, and I did not know whether to take him straight in to Kuttahpore, or send a man to fetch Dr. Herring out to us.

I finally decided, with the help of the servants' advice, to adopt the first course, and in a few minutes, when the storm had cleared off with a few heavy, pattering drops of rain, leaving the air cooler and fresher, and a thick white covering of dust over everything, the wagonette was ready to take us into the station.

The servants had arranged a board across the body of the carriage, on which they laid Andrew, still unconscious, supported with rugs and pillows, while I stood watching them, the full force of my utter helplessness rushing over me.

It had all happened so suddenly. I had scarcely begun to realize that it was *Andrew* who lay there, with his face so distorted as to be hardly recognizable, and the only sign of life about him the heavy, stertorous breathing. I felt numbed, and incapable of thinking or feeling, as I took my place on the front seat of the wagonette, and the long drive of ten miles that followed, through the now rapidly-cooling air, seemed as unreal as a dream.

(To be continued.)

Pride's Punishment.

CHAPTER I.

"You shall not sin,
If you do say we think him over-proud."
"Troilus and Cressida."

BERNARD FILMER was to be married on the morrow. He and Helen Lermite had been engaged exactly two months, and during that time he had done much. His regiment had been stationed in India three years, and the very day the news came that it was ordered home, he proposed to Helen Lermite, was accepted, and sent in his papers at once. He also wrote to his mother, telling her of his engagement, of his impending marriage, and of his speedy return home. Then he gave a series of bachelor parties to his brother officers in such style that they declared him to be a very decent fellow, and now, this last night of his freedom, he sat alone, satisfied with himself and his future and dreaming blissful dreams.

Helen Lermite was the daughter of Judge Lermite, who came out a young lawyer to India early in the "fifties," had married a girl with money and never returned to England. He belonged to a good English family, with whom he had quarrelled ; why, no one knew or cared. Nor did it signify, for in India, ten years is the utmost extent that one looks back for a man's antecedents, and the judge's had been irreproachable for more than forty. Moreover he had great wealth. For his money Bernard Filmer cared nothing ; for his descent—a very great deal. He was a fastidiously proud man. More rather than less, he had known Helen for two years, but had foreborne to speak to her until he could retire. Then, as I said before, the very day that he heard that his regiment was ordered home, he spoke, and was at once accepted.

He had finished his last pipe, and was about to turn in for the night, when his man appeared in the doorway. Before he could open his lips, Filmer said very decidedly :

"I'll not see a soul, Jones. Tell them I've gone to bed."

"Certainly, sir. It's the judge, sir."

"The judge ! Oh, by all means show him in," and when the man had gone he thought, "What the dickens does he want at this time of night ? Nothing the matter with Helen, I hope."

Judge Lermite was a tall, fine-looking man of about sixty. His life in India seemed to have agreed with him, for he was hale and fresh-coloured. Nevertheless, he looked anxious and uneasy. Filmer observed it, and giving him a chair waited for him to speak.

"It's of Helen—No, she's quite well. Don't be frightened."

"All right. If she's well, nothing else can matter much."

"I'm glad to hear you say so," replied the judge. "But there's something that—er—perhaps I ought to have told you before. Although I love her as much as any father could, she's no child of mine."

Filmer jumped to his feet, and demanded in a furious tone :

"Whose child is she, then ?"

"I don't know. Twenty years ago my wife—she was alive then—and I went up to Mudgepore for a little change ; we were only able to get a few days, and the day before we came away a baby of about a month old was found in a box in the compound of our bungalow. There were a few air holes in the lid of the box, but not a mark of any kind to lead to identification, either on the child's clothes—which were of the poorest description—or on the box itself. My wife took a fancy to the child and implored me to adopt it. I refused at first, but finding that her heart was set on my doing so I consented. We had her baptized Helen, my wife's name, and from that day to this she has always been with me, for when my wife died I was too fond of the child to part with her."

"And you haven't the faintest idea who her parents are ?"

"Not the faintest. There were only eight white people—all told—when we were at Mudgepore, and there had been no white child born there for six months."

Filmer's rage burst forth.

The judge waited quietly until he had finished, then he simply said :

"I presume you wish to break the engagement."

"Break the engagement," he thundered ; "jilt a girl at the eleventh hour ! What do you take me for ?"

"For an honest gentleman," replied the judge warmly ; "but I

shall be a desolate old man when Helen is gone," and without another word he left the room.

As soon as he found himself alone, Filmer sat down and began to look at the thing squarely. Without doubt it was a bitter pill for a proud man to swallow ! Still Helen was innocent. She knew nothing about her birth. Of that he felt sure. Nor, as far as he knew, was there a living soul beside the judge who was wiser than Helen on that point. Besides it might well be that Helen's birth was as good as his own. Privately he would try and find out if any white child had been stolen about twenty years ago. He would put the matter into the hands of a lawyer he knew, who was sharp as a needle and secret as death. He would do this before he left India. In the meantime, he would banish the hideous affair from his mind, and think only of Helen ; of Helen herself, apart from her birth. As he was very much in love, and as Helen was very sweet and beautiful, he had no difficulty in doing this.

Well, they were married, and a month after the wedding set sail for England. Before they sailed, Bernard Filmer instructed the "sharp and secret" one to make inquiries. For the present he was too much in love to be very anxious about the result. But "count no man happy until he is dead," says the proverb. About a week before the end of the voyage came trouble. One day Filmer found Helen weeping in her cabin. He tried to comfort her, begging her to tell him what ailed her.

"It's father's birthday," she sobbed. "He is so miserable now I have left him. I can't help thinking about him."

"Don't, Helen ; don't, my sweet," said her husband, pulling her on his knee and kissing her tenderly. "I assure you your father is not lonely. He is much respected and has many friends in Bombay, and I daresay elsewhere."

"Didn't he tell you, the night before our wedding, why his relations in England will have nothing to do with me?"

"Yes. He told me. How long have you known, Helen?" this was said gravely.

"Why do you look like that? I've known since my eighteenth birthday. Do you think I ought to have told you?" she asked anxiously.

"Yes, Helen, I do."

"But I couldn't. Father said I was never to speak about it."

"Then you ought never to have accepted me," said he shortly. And then they quarrelled. Which was a small matter. But they didn't make it up. Which was a great one!

You see, he considered it was her duty to say that she was sorry she allowed him to be deceived. And she considered that she'd done nothing to be sorry about. Therefore, as there was a fine streak of obstinacy in both their tempers, they were outwardly extremely polite, and inwardly intensely miserable. And they were on these terms when they arrived at Filmer Grange on a visit to his mother and sister.

They got there about tea-time on a chill November day. The bride was received very warmly by Mrs. Filmer and Grace. They made much of her, and after tea took her to her room themselves. After seeing that she was comfortable they left her to rest before she dressed for dinner. Then mother and daughter made expeditious toilettes, and met in the former's boudoir in order to compare notes.

"Well, mother, what do you think of her?" asked Grace.

"She is very pretty."

"Mother, dear, I have eyes."

"Yes, of course," said Mrs. Filmer absently, and then pulling herself together she added, "the truth is, Grace, I don't understand Bernard's manner to his wife."

"He is very polite and friendly," answered Grace. "But if he were my husband and he treated me so—I think, I really think I should get a pistol and shoot him!"

"Grace," cried Mrs. Filmer reprovingly.

"Well, mother, I can't help it. I was looking forward to our all being happy together. Instead, I believe we are all going to be miserable."

"Hush!" exclaimed her mother; "I hear Bernard's footstep." In another moment he entered the room.

He was tall and handsome and looked well, but his face wore a grave, almost severe, expression. He was not at all like the brother from whom Grace had parted three years before. Then he seemed a boy. Now, at seven-and-twenty, he looked old and grave enough for fifty!

"I thought I should find you here," and he kissed his mother. Then turning to Grace he held her at arms' length, scanning her from head to foot.

"You've grown pretty," said he, "despite your snub nose." Grace made him a low courtesy.

"How kind it is of you to say so," she exclaimed. "You can't think how I have dreaded this moment. The last verdict you passed on my unfortunate phiz was, 'It's impossible for a girl with a snub like yours to help being plain!'"

"Perhaps I've been rash," said he coolly. "We shall see how you look in the morning."

"Mother, dear," he went on, "you talked about leaving The Grange when I married. I want to beg of you to do nothing of the kind. I want things to go on just as they have always done."

"What does Helen say to that?"

"You will find that Helen likes whatever I like."

"How sweet!" exclaimed Grace. But her brother took no notice of her. Mrs. Filmer spoke again.

"You see Grace is only just out, and I owe it to her that I should entertain on my own account, which I could not do in a house of which I was not mistress—besides young married people are better alone."

"I daresay I shall be away a great deal," said he carelessly, "and Helen will be glad of your company."

"Well, well; we'll talk about it by-and-bye. We'd better go down to the drawing-room now, or Helen 'll be there before us."

Helen *was* in the drawing-room. She was standing near the fire, looking down into the burning coals. She wore a pale blue plush gown, trimmed with costly white lace. Her hair was piled high on her head, and in it she wore a pearl comb. If Mrs. Filmer had thought her pretty in her winter wraps, she thought her lovely now. Her face was very sad, but when Mrs. Filmer spoke to her, she turned and smiled immediately.

"I am shocked you should be here alone. You must think us very rude."

"No," said she, smiling again. A very sweet smile was hers.

When the three were alone after dinner, Mrs. Filmer told Helen what Bernard had said about her and Grace staying at The Grange, adding:

"But, my dear, of course I can't consent to this arrangement, if you have the slightest feeling against it."

"I have not," she replied quickly. "I should like it very much."

"I am afraid you'll find this place very different from Bombay. Do you like India?" asked Grace.

"Yes. I've never lived anywhere else."

"Didn't you come to school in England?"

"No. I've never been educated. I've always been with my father. I travelled about with him everywhere, and had lessons whenever it was possible."

"He must miss you very much."

"He does. Oh, he does!" and hardly able to suppress her tears she left the room. Grace wanted to follow her, but her mother stopped her.

"Mother, what can be the matter? I'm sure they are neither of them happy."

Mrs. Filmer shook her head. In a few minutes Helen returned and apologized very prettily to Mrs. Filmer for her little outburst.

Just then Bernard came into the room, and after a moment asked Grace to sing something.

"But, Helen—if you are not too tired, won't you sing something?"

Bernard opened the piano. His wife evidently looked on this as an expression of his desire that she should sing. She had a lovely voice and sang well, so well that Grace begged off singing that night.

After breakfast next morning Mrs. Filmer suggested that as it was fine and frosty, Bernard might like to take his wife round the park.

"I'm afraid I'm too busy this morning," he replied. "But a walk would do Grace a deal of good. She's dreadfully fat and out of condition."

Grace surveyed her own pretty plump little figure for a moment.

"Slanderer!" she exclaimed, shaking her finger at him. "Come along, Helen. We'll go and see if the ice is likely to bear to-morrow; and if it is, we'll give him a lovely time, putting on our skates and piloting us round."

Helen seemed pleased, and they both went off to put on their wraps. When they came down, Mrs. Filmer and Bernard went into the hall—she to give Grace a message for the woman at the lodge; he to see that Helen was properly wrapped up. He went

over to her, and, without any tenderness in his tone, said, "Lift up your chin." She did so, and he examined the fastening of her jacket.

"This doesn't meet properly," said he, and he fetched a thick white silk wrap of his own and tied it round her pretty throat. He couldn't have noticed the soft pink flush on her sweet face, or he must have kissed her. Instead, he bestowed a careless brotherly salute on Grace.

Mother and son watched them run down the hall steps together. Then Mrs. Filmer followed her son into the library.

"Bernard," said she, "I don't understand your manner to your wife."

"Indeed, mother," said he quietly. "In what way?"

His tone was not inviting, and Mrs. Filmer was surprised to find that she found it difficult to speak to him. She, his mother, who had nursed, scolded and praised him—been mother and father both to him since her husband died—was embarrassed and dumb. She began to realize that this tall, dignified, bearded creature was a man. True, he was her son, but their relations seemed, not changed exactly, but different. From that moment she found that she was no longer the commander.

"Well, mother, in what way?" he repeated. An amused expression robbed his features for one moment of their sombre gravity.

Still his mother could not speak.

"You want to ask me some question about Helen, don't you, dear? And you find it difficult to say what you wish because I'm no longer a little boy?" and he smiled again.

Mrs. Filmer felt nettled.

"Perhaps it will do as well if I tell you what Grace said last night."

"What was it?"

"She said if she were Helen, and you treated her in that polite friendly fashion, she should shoot you."

"It is to be hoped Helen won't do that," said he coolly.

"No, poor child. She loves you too well."

"She loves Judge Lermite better," he replied bitterly.

"Her father? Fiddle-de-dee!"

"Mother, dear, this is a matter between me and Helen, and——"

"You'd rather I did not interfere?"

"Very good of you, dear," said he gently. "I assure you, Helen is the best girl in the world, and worthy of all the love and affection you and Grace can give her."

"I am sure of that," his mother replied warmly.

CHAPTER II.

"Our remedies oft in ourselves do lie,
Which we ascribe to heaven."—*All's Well that Ends Well.*"

A MONTH passed. Bernard and Helen seemed on the same footing. Grace privately informed her mother that she supposed it was the fashion in India for husband and wife to be so civil to each other. It wouldn't suit her, but as she was never likely to go to India, that didn't signify. Mrs. Filmer only shook her head.

Meantime Bernard had not heard from the "sharp and secret" one.

One evening they all went to a ball given by Lady Towton. Here Helen was astonished to find her "double" in a Miss Kate Marchmont, only daughter of General and Mrs. Marchmont. The Marchmonts were new-comers, and they and Helen both made their first appearance in public at Lady Towton's ball. It was amusing, the way in which they were mistaken for each other. Helen wore her bridal gown, and Miss Marchmont also wearing a white gown aided the deception. But the greatest joke of all was when General Marchmont himself came up and said to Helen:

"Now, Kate, your mother is looking for you. It's time we were going." Then he tucked her hand under his arm, and was walking her off, when Mrs. Filmer, who was standing by laughing, came to the rescue, saying:

"That's my girl—not yours, general."

"Nonsense, my dear madam. Miss Grace is dancing with my son. They passed a minute ago."

"But this young lady is my son's wife. Allow me to introduce you to Mrs. Bernard Filmer."

The general dropped Helen's hand and stared at her, rubbed his glasses, and stared again.

"I—I beg your pardon," he exclaimed, at length convinced. "But don't you see the likeness to my Kitty yourself, madam?"

"It is most striking," agreed Mrs. Filmer.

"It's astounding," replied the general, emphasizing his words with a slight stamp of his foot.

"It's too late to speak to my wife about it to-night, but if you'll allow me I'll bring her over to call on you to-morrow. Where is that Kitty?"

"I think Miss Marchmont is in the conservatory with Lord Milton," said Mrs. Filmer mischievously.

"Conservatory. I'll——" and off the old gentleman hurried.

The Filmers had all come over together in the big landau, but as Grace and her mother were going to stay all night at Lady Towton's and return home to lunch next day, there was a twelve miles' drive for Bernard and his wife together. It was past two o'clock when he came and asked her if she was ready to go.

"Quite ready. I'll say good-night to your mother and Grace at once."

They made their adieux and were soon in the carriage driving home.

There are a good many unpleasant things to put up with as one goes through life, and a long drive, on a dark night, in a close carriage, with a silent displeased husband, is not one of the least. And the fact that you are dying to throw your arms round the displeased husband's neck, but don't dare, rather increases the misery of the situation than not.

For the first mile neither of them spoke. They each leaned back in their own corner of the carriage. Helen closed her eyes and pretended to go to sleep. Then she opened them again to see if his eyes were shut. No. They were wide open. He was looking straight before him.

"How long will it take to drive back?" she asked.

"About two hours. The roads are heavy and hilly."

"Oh. Isn't it very cold?"

"Very. You had better have both rugs," and he proceeded to divest himself of his.

"Bernard, you shall not," she exclaimed.

He shrugged his shoulders and leaned back in his own corner again.

Dead silence.

"Bernard, do you think I'm like Miss Marchmont?"

"Yes."

"Do you think she is pretty?"

"Rather," coolly.

"Oh," flatly.

Silence again. After a time :

"You used to think me pretty once."

"I daresay."

"You called me lovely," reproachfully.

"Did I?" unconcernedly.

Helen began to cry. After she had cried for about ten minutes, her husband, in his turn, broke the silence.

"Helen," he said severely, "if you don't cease crying at once, I shall go and sit outside."

This was too terrible. Almost instantly Helen left off.

"I should *very* much like to know what you are crying about," he added with asperity.

Helen said nothing. Perhaps she felt it was his turn to talk now.

"Why don't you answer me?" angrily.

This was a good sign. He hadn't been angry with her since they had been in England. Still his wife spoke not.

"*Will* you answer me?" and he raised his hand as if to pull the check cord.

"Because—because—I'm so miserable," stammered she in haste, lest he should stop the carriage and go outside.

"Pshaw!" contemptuously.

Helen decided that she certainly would not speak to him any more. He certainly could care nothing for her if all he could say was "pshaw" when she told him that she was miserable.

Therein she was wrong. He was quite as angry with himself as he was with her. For he was no fool, and he was beginning to see the "size" of things. He began to remember that his wife was very young, and if she looked at things through the spectacles of a man who had rescued her from a life of beggary, and had loved and cherished her all her days, was she so much to blame? Perhaps it would be better to chide her gently and to forgive her? Especially as he found life under existing circumstances anything but pleasant to himself.

Therefore, as a preliminary :

"Are you very cold?" he asked.

Her hands were like ice. She gently touched his cheek with the tips of her fingers.

"Why, you are nearly frozen," he exclaimed. "What a brute I am. After living all your life in that hot place, too." He gathered her two hands in his and rubbed them. In a moment, I am sure neither of them could tell how it came about, her head was on his breast and she was sobbing out:

"Oh, Bernard, I'm so sorry. But I never felt I was doing wrong in not telling you."

"There, there, darling, say nothing more about it," and he kissed her again and again.

But now his wife was eager to show him how little she was really to blame.

"You see, Bernard dear, it was not as if father had broken the law. He was only *wild*. Young men in England are sometimes wild, aren't they?"

"Oh, dear, yes, little one," said her husband, wondering what on earth she was talking about.

"Were you ever wild, Bernard?"

"Well, no, I don't think I ever was. It's not in my line," said he smiling.

"Perhaps if you had been, you wouldn't have been so hard on me for not talking about poor father."

The carriage lamp shone full on her husband's face. She thought he looked rather puzzled.

"I don't think he was going to tell me anything about it, but on my eighteenth birthday he gave me one present with his own hands, and then, while we were at tiffin, a lot more came directed in various handwritings, and when I asked him where they all came from he laughed and said, 'Oh, from all the aunts, uncles and cousins you *ought* to have had,' and then he told me that when he was young he had been a great trouble to his people, and that they had sent him out to India, and that he was so angry with them that he had never written to any one of them since." Here Helen stopped again to look at her husband. To her surprise, he still looked mystified.

"Oh dear," she exclaimed, "don't you understand?"

"Can't say that I see what all this has to do with our quarrel."

"But you do understand that I didn't think that I was bound to tell you about father's young days when I really didn't know what he had done."

"Of course you were not bound to tell. I should have been very much surprised if you *had* told me."

"Then why were you angry with me for not telling?" she demanded, raising her head to stare at him.

"Whew!" whistled he. "Do you think that the judge came down to my bungalow at midnight in order to tell me *that*?"

"Yes."

"Well, he didn't."

"What did he come for, then?"

"Never mind, sweetheart," and Bernard kissed his wife again and again.

All her coaxing got nothing more out of him, but she didn't care much; she was only too happy that they were friends once more.

Just before the carriage stopped he said, "My sweet, put both arms round my neck and say, 'Bernard, I forgive you for being a hasty fool.'"

She put her arms round his neck and said:

"Bernard, I love you so much that I only wish I'd anything to forgive."

"Sweet wife," he replied. What he thought was, "If ever a man deserved to be kicked for behaving like an ass that man is myself. How I contrived to make such a hash of things generally is more than I can imagine. It's a happy thing for me that I've an angel for a wife."

Next morning Bernard had a curious letter from Judge Lermite. It contained two inclosures, marked respectively 1 and 2, and addressed, "General Marchmont." From his letter it seemed that the judge had also been making inquiries respecting Helen's parentage, and being a judge, and therefore knowing something of the native police, and having some influence in that quarter, had been more successful than the "sharp and secret." In his letter the judge requested Bernard to give the general Inclosure 1, and afterwards, if he asked for it, Inclosure 2. He seemed to be aware that the Marchmonts lived at Bush Hall, near the Filmers. His letter to Bernard was short, but he sent a long one to Helen, with which she was delighted.

Mrs. Filmer and Grace returned to lunch. After lunch Grace said saucily, "I really believe you two have kissed and made it up. I hope you didn't give in too easily, Helen. He wants keeping in his place, my dear." Then she turned and fled.

General and Mrs. Marchmont called about four o'clock. Mrs. Marchmont seemed much struck with Helen's likeness to her daughter. While she was talking with her about India Bernard took the old gentleman aside, and gave him Inclosure 1. He looked rather surprised, but with a word of apology walked to the window and read it. Then he asked Bernard for No. 2. When it was given him he said carelessly—although the pallor of his face betrayed his inward anxiety—"Can I go into the library? These letters require careful reading."

Bernard took him across the hall into the library, and was leaving the room when the general stopped him.

"Don't go away. Stay until I've read this letter. I think it concerns you."

Bernard sat down opposite the general, watching him as he read. Presently Inclosure 1 was put in his hand. It commenced :

"DEAR SIR,

"Although personally unknown to you, I am aware that you were in India, stationed at Mundore, in '72, and that whilst you were there Mrs. Marchmont was confined with twin daughters, one of whom was born dead. Am I right in believing that the dead child was at once taken away and buried without either you or its mother having seen it? If so, ask Bernard Filmer for Inclosure 2."

When Bernard had finished he waited for the general to speak.

"What you have read is quite true," said he. "I was away when the children were born. When I returned in the evening my wife was delirious, and the dead child already buried."

"But I suppose the doctor knew it was dead," said Bernard, thinking that the judge had discovered that the child had been buried alive.

"There was no doctor. The children were born prematurely. My wife disliked the regimental doctor, and was attended by a native woman, and although I sent for McEwan directly I found she was so ill, he was not present at the birth."

"I see," said Bernard, still puzzled as to where his concern in the matter came in.

"Well, Judge Lermite tells me in Inclosure 2 that he had just been called to hear the confession of a native woman dying from cholera. She stated that she had attended my wife in her confinement. That she had taken away the second born of the twins, supposing it to be dead, but that on afterwards discovering it was alive the temptation seized her to steal the child. It was on this account that she pretended to take umbrage at McEwan being called in, and took herself off the next day without saying a word to any one. She kept the babe until it was about six weeks old, when she was so terrified by the wife of a soldier whom she met up in the hills near Mudgepore telling her that she believed she had stolen it, that she resolved to get rid of the child at once ; which she did by placing it at sunrise one morning in the compound of a bungalow at Mudgepore."

Bernard started to his feet.

"You don't mean ——" he stammered.

"Yes, my dear boy, I do. The judge feels convinced that your wife is my child."

The young man was now to the full as excited as General Marchmont.

"And you? What do you think?"

"I hope and trust it may prove true. The great resemblance existing between your wife and Kitty seems to point that way. But it will be better to keep the matter to ourselves until the judge himself comes to England, which it seems he intends doing at once."

"So Helen says. I quite agree with you that nothing had better be said until then."

Next month, when the judge arrived in England, it was proved beyond a doubt that Helen was Kitty Marchmont's twin sister. And the only person dissatisfied with the result was the judge. He thought it his duty to bring forward his proofs, but was disgusted when he found them accepted.

A. E. NOBLE.

"The House that Jack Built."

By DARLEY DALE,

Author of "FAIR KATHERINE," "THE VILLAGE BLACKSMITH," etc.

CHAPTER XXVII.

DECEIVERS EVER.

It was the last day of the year, a cold, bright, frosty December morning, with a cloudless sky overhead. A thin veil of snow thrown lightly over the trees and rocks, the houses and streets of St. Helier's, on the piers and the ships in the harbour, gave Jersey a strange appearance, for snow is not common there, on this thirty-first of December as Felix Oxburgh landed.

He was met by Mrs. Lockwood, who, in a sealskin hat and jacket, looked more than usually pretty, and as the cousins drove off many a head was turned to look at the beautiful Mrs. Lockwood and her great handsome squire.

"Is there any news, Felix?" said Amy, when she had sympathized with him on the horrors of the sea passage, for he was a wretched sailor.

"Yes, unless you have heard it already. Frances has presented Selsey with twin daughters, and he is highly delighted."

"That is news indeed. And how are Aunt and Uncle Oxburgh? I seem to have quite lost sight of them since I married. It is so sad. I often think of the happy days I spent at Oxburgh, when we were all like one family," said Amy, with a slightly injured air, which implied it was no fault of hers that the intimacy was broken off.

"Oh! I have a message for you from my father; he hopes you will arrange to spend the first fortnight you are in England at Oxburgh. I expect you will hear from my mother about it while I am here," said Felix.

"Oh! I am glad. We shall be delighted to go; it is so long since I have seen them. And how is dear Joy—is she very happy?"

"I didn't think her in very good spirits at Christmas, although Graham was over for a few days; but she has everything to

manage now, and perhaps it is too much for her. Joy is very young to have so much responsibility thrown on her shoulders, and I fancied she seemed worried."

"I don't wonder at it. Frances did all that in the old days. I should not think housekeeping was much in Joy's line; they ought to have a housekeeper; I always told them so. When Joy marries they will be obliged to," said Amy as she drove up to her house, where Green was on the look-out for them

Green had been nearly three months in Jersey, and had kept the pledge faithfully, though in his capacity of butler he had many opportunities of breaking it; and the real object of Felix's visit to Jersey was to bring him and Rose together again, as Green shrewdly suspected.

Amy, unaware of this, took the compliment to herself, and thought she was the magnet which had drawn her handsome cousin across the Channel.

Amy was feeling very much worried. Every post brought her a bill, and her quarterly allowance, half of which she owed Felix and Miss Keppel, only sufficed to pay them and Janvrin's quarterly sum on account, and left nothing for her other creditors. Janvrin was getting very importunate, and Amy felt sure he would not let her leave the island unless she paid a large part of his bill, and to do this she was relying almost entirely on Felix to be her banker.

"I thought we would go by train to Gorey Castle after luncheon, Felix, and stop at Saumarez on the way back and have tea with my aunts," said Amy at luncheon.

"Yes, dear; I am at your disposal. The only thing I must do here is to go to Sark one day next week. I thought we might get up a little picnic and take Green with us to wait on us," said Felix.

"Delightful! We will ask Aunt Sophy and Aunt Lydia to come with us; it will do Aunt Sophy good to get out, and Aunt Lydia will amuse us with her girlishness. She is more skittish than ever since Aunt Dorcas eloped; thereto hangs a tale, which I will tell you this afternoon," said Amy.

And as they travelled on the miniature railway which skirts the coast from St. Helier's to Gorey, Amy told her cousin the tale of Miss Dorcas's engagement and marriage; but Felix was so interested in looking at the wet purple sands gleaming under

the sun, which was now getting low on the horizon ; on the long foam-crested green waves of the ebbing tide ; on the succession of quaint round martello towers, which rise like Norman watchmen at intervals along the shore ; on the stacks of *vraic* and carts of the same on the beach ; on the sea-gulls floating in waving circles close to the surface of the waves and walking about the wet sand, purple in the afternoon light from the sea-weed which covers it ; he was so interested in all this, after the London slums he spent his time in, that he only grasped one fact, namely, that Amy had successfully imitated her aunt's writing.

However, later in the afternoon, when they went to Saumarez Cottage to tea, he tried to recall the story. Miss Lydia was charmed with Felix, and as he, with his usual courtesy, talked to her, her susceptible nature fell a prey to his fascinations ; and by the time Amy rose to go she was over head and ears in love with him.

To be in love was a chronic affection to which Miss Lydia was subject ; she was always in love, or imagined herself in love, with some one ; a hero in a novel would captivate her fancy, *faute de mieux* ; but this great handsome Felix was a godsend to the romantic little lady.

She suspected from the very first she had made an impression on him, and the way in which he handed her her tea strengthened this idea, though, as a matter of fact, it was the most ordinary action, performed in the most ordinary way and quite devoid of all hidden meaning ; and when her imagination detected a lingering squeeze in the shake of his hand on leaving her cup of happiness was full.

If her conquest required any confirmation, it received it when Miss Keppel informed her of Amy's invitation to Sark, and added it emanated from Felix.

"I knew it," exclaimed Miss Lydia, her maiden cheeks suffused with crimson.

"You knew what ?" said Miss Keppel.

"Oh ! oh ! nothing, Sophy," giggled Miss Lydia in a very self-conscious manner. "I think, Sophy, if you have no objection, I should like to go to St. Helier's and get a new hat to-morrow," she added presently, thinking the excursion to Sark demanded this addition to her wardrobe.

Miss Keppel consented, and for once allowed Miss Lydia to go

shopping alone, a privilege that little lady somewhat abused by buying a hat suitable to a girl of eighteen, in which she looked ridiculously juvenile, but which she felt confident would complete the conquest already begun of Felix Oxburgh's heart.

On the afternoon of the day preceding the one fixed for the excursion, Miss Lydia was taking advantage of Miss Keppel's absence to try on her new hat for at least the twentieth time since its arrival, when Mr. Oxburgh called, and she hurried down with beating heart, leaving the hat on her bed, to receive him.

Felix had called to tell them to be at Grève de Lecq, the nearest point to Sark, at ten o'clock the next morning, but Miss Lydia chose to imagine the visit was an excuse to see her.

"I am looking forward to a delightful day," said Felix, who was thinking of Rose and Green, whose meeting was to be a surprise to both.

"So am I," said Miss Lydia, modestly blushing.

"I hear Sark is a very romantic spot, and I expect a little romance will be enacted there to-morrow," said Felix, still thinking of Rose.

"He means to propose to-morrow. Oh, what a state I feel in! I—I almost wish Sophy would return; I am so nervous. It is so very awkward under the circumstances," thought Miss Lydia.

"I expect Sophy immediately," she remarked.

"Ah! We will keep that romance a secret till to-morrow, I think, Miss Lydia. I have not breathed it to Amy yet," said Felix.

"I am so glad you haven't," said Miss Lydia involuntarily, feeling sure Amy would do her best to laugh him out of the attachment she imagined he had formed for herself, if he confided in her.

Felix thought the remark rather odd, but paid no attention to it, and soon after took his leave with another handshake, into which Miss Lydia infused much meaning.

After he was gone Miss Lydia heard a great deal of scampering about on the landing overhead, which betokened the puppy was trespassing on forbidden ground. So she went upstairs to see what it was doing, and arrived in time to see the last destroying bite given to her new hat, now a hat no longer. All that remained of it was scraps of straw and ribbons and feathers scattered over the landing.

The cause of this mischief wagged its tail, and barked with delight at its performance, as Miss Lydia appeared on the scene; and when Miss Keppel returned half-an-hour later, Miss Lydia and a housemaid were breathless, having been in pursuit of the puppy ever since—one armed with a dog-whip, the other with a walking-stick; but the puppy was master of the field.

"Sophy," exclaimed Miss Lydia, who was ready to cry, "if that puppy remains in this house, I do not. It is beyond all bearing."

"What has he been doing now, the naughty dog?" asked Miss Keppel, as the dog threw itself on its back at her feet, deprecating the punishment its canine conscience suggested it merited.

"It has torn my new hat to atoms, the horrid, mischievous thing—I hate it," said Miss Lydia, on the verge of tears.

Miss Keppel had taken a great liking to this animal since Miss Dorcas's marriage, and was privately of opinion that the fault in the present instance was more Miss Lydia's than the dog's. She also secretly rejoiced that the hat she considered ridiculous no longer existed. However, she did violence to her own feelings and the puppy's by whipping it.

Miss Lydia, however, never forgave the dog, and to her dying day believed Felix would have proposed to her if she had only worn the hat the puppy destroyed. "On such slight things," she said, "do our destinies hang." They do; but it was not Miss Lydia's destiny which hung on the hat, although it was the indirect means of affecting the destiny of some one else.

"Where did you get the hat, Lydia?" said Miss Keppel.

"At Janvrin's. Do you think they would make me some allowance for it, Sophy? We are very good customers, and we introduced Amy, who must be one of their very best customers."

"They might; I'll go with you and see, if you like. The horse wants more exercise, and there is plenty of time before tea," said Miss Keppel.

Accordingly, the sisters drove into town, and Miss Keppel, who liked to make a fuss about small things, asked to see Madame Janvrin alone, and in the course of the interview learnt to her horror and surprise that Mrs. Lockwood owed the Janvrins over three hundred pounds, a piece of news Madame Janvrin was very glad to have the opportunity of communicating

under the strictest secrecy to Miss Keppel, who, having introduced her niece, felt to a certain extent responsible.

"I am sure they must be living beyond their income. I will sound Amy on the subject to-morrow, but I am half afraid Jack knows nothing of these debts," said Miss Keppel to her sister on her way home.

"Oh, Sophy, surely, surely Amy can't be so wicked as to have a secret from her husband! Fancy any woman being guilty of such a sin. Husbands and wives should be of one mind as well as of one flesh. If I were married I should share my every thought with my husband," said Miss Lydia, thinking how delightful it would be to share her every thought with Felix.

"You would bore him to death in a week, if you did," said Miss Keppel sharply.

"Oh, Sophy, you are only a woman. It requires a masculine mind to respond fully to a woman's inmost soul," said Miss Lydia.

"Inmost nonsense, Lydia! A man with any sense would laugh at you the first time you talked such trash to him, and swear at you the second; and if you ventured on a third trial, it would serve you right if he beat you," said Miss Keppel severely, venting the anger she inwardly felt against Mrs. Lockwood on poor Miss Lydia.

Miss Lydia sighed, and thought what bliss it would be to escape from her unsympathetic sister's society and spend the rest of her life with Felix Oxburgh's masculine mind responding to her inmost soul.

"What age is Mr. Oxburgh, Sophy?" she asked next.

"About five-and-twenty, I believe. Why?"

"Five-and-thirty you mean, Sophy. I am sure he must be at least that; he looks it fully, and he is the eldest of the family," said Miss Lydia, who was inwardly trying to make Felix as old as possible, so that by making herself young in an inverse proportion they might meet on equal, or nearly equal, terms of age.

"Well, Amy can tell you to a day. Ask her to-morrow," said Miss Keppel.

The next day was a delightful one for the time of year; but just at the last moment Jack Lockwood was prevented from going to Sark. So the party consisted of the Misses Keppel, Amy, Major Graham and Felix. Green went, ostensibly to

carry shawls and wraps—really, as Felix alone knew, to be reconciled to his wife ; but the man was in ignorance of the surprise in store for him, not having the least idea of Rose's hiding-place.

They reached Sark about twelve, just in time, Amy said, to look at some of the caves before luncheon. To Miss Lydia's annoyance Amy monopolized her handsome cousin all the morning, declaring she was too nervous, after her adventure with Jack, to venture into a cave except with Felix, who knew all about the tides.

On leaving the caves, however, Felix contrived to get by Miss Lydia's side, aided by that lady in this endeavour, and as they walked back to the hotel he unconsciously excited her secret hopes by referring to the romance he had spoken of the previous day.

"The time has almost arrived for the consummation of my romance," said Felix, as they walked across the Coupée, the narrow road which separates Great Sark from Little Sark.

"What beautiful language he uses to express his thoughts," was Miss Lydia's mental comment, as she coloured with expectant delight.

"I have been longing for this hour ever since I came to Jersey," pursued Felix.

"It must have been love at first sight, for he first saw me the day after his arrival," thought Miss Lydia.

"Have you really?" she simpered.

"Yes, I shall be the happiest man in Europe to-night," said Felix.

"And I the happiest woman," thought Miss Lydia, but fortunately she was too shy to say so.

"Are we going right?" she asked nervously, as Felix passed the turn to the hotel they were to lunch at.

"Yes, I am going to that cottage first, if it is not too far for you ; that is the scene of my romance," said Felix, pointing to a pretty thatched cottage in the dale a little below them.

"Oh no, it is not too far," said Miss Lydia hastily.

"I wonder if he is going to propose that we should live there," she thought.

"It is an ideal cottage, isn't it? See, there is a plantation close by, so the old song, 'In my cottage near a wood,' is most applicable."

"It is a charming spot, so romantic," said Miss Lydia.

"I knew you would think so ; what do you say when I tell you my heroine lives there ?"

Miss Lydia's hopes fell from blood-heat to zero at this startling announcement ; had he actually been so cruel as to bring her so far to show her her rival ? He could not surely be guilty of such perfidy ; he must mean his heroine would live there, or perhaps he was speaking in poetry and meant she lived there in imagination.

"She does not actually live there, does she ?" she asked.

"Well, no, perhaps not," said Felix.

Miss Lydia's hopes rose again to summer-heat.

"Ah ! here comes my hero," said Felix, as Green approached the cottage from the opposite direction, being under orders to meet Felix there with a parcel at this time.

Miss Lydia's hopes once more sank to freezing point.

"Where ?" she asked.

"There ! Don't you see Green ? He has lost his wife for two years, and she is in that cottage and he does not know it. I am going to send him up to it with a message, and she will open the door to him. Just fancy what his delight will be. We must not go any nearer, but I could not resist coming so far. All right, Green ; that is the cottage," cried Felix, raising his voice, as Green touched his hat and, opening the wicket gate, went up the neat garden-path to the porch.

A minute later the door opened, there was a suppressed cry of surprise and delight from Green, and a young pretty woman threw herself into his arms, and Felix turned away to look at the view of the Dixcart valley, and Miss Lydia thought there were tears in his eyes.

As for Green, he and Rose were sobbing in each other's arms, and vowing that nothing but death should ever separate them again.

"I must go and speak to them when they have recovered a little ; I'll overtake you and tell you the rest of their story ; it is rather chilly for you standing here," said Felix, and poor Miss Lydia was so downcast and disappointed that she was glad to take the hint and be alone for a few minutes.

"Well, Rose, are you glad to see your husband again ?" said Felix a few minutes later as he joined Rose and Green in the porch.

"Oh, yes! Mr. Felix; I can never thank you and Mr. Selsey enough, sir."

"We neither of us can; you have been the making of me, sir. I should have given up again and again if it had not been for you and the hope of seeing Rose again, but I knew you would keep your word, Mr. Felix, and that helped me to keep mine. I'll never part from Rose again, sir; no, not for a night. What's to be done, sir? how are we to manage?"

"I must ask Mrs. Lockwood; perhaps she might take you as nurse, Rose; I know she wants a nurse, and I know also neither she nor Mr. Lockwood wish to part with Green. Don't come up to the hotel till you hear from me, Green; I'll undertake to make it right with your mistress," said Felix as he left to overtake Miss Lydia.

It was finally arranged that Rose should return to Jersey with them that day, and stay with the Lockwoods as a visitor until the present nurse left, and then she was to take her place and go to England with them.

In spite of Felix's delight neither Miss Keppel nor Miss Lydia thought the day had been successful; Miss Keppel had had no opportunity of speaking to Amy about Janvrin's bill, and was sure Amy purposely avoided a *tête-à-tête* with her, so she went home depressed and worried.

Miss Lydia, having been once more the victim of blighted hopes and what she called the perfidy of man, returned in a most dejected state, and in reply to her sister's inquiries as to the cause of her low spirits, gave vent to the trite old saying, "Men were deceivers ever;" more than this Miss Keppel could not get out of her.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

GREAT WAS THE FALL THEREOF.

THE expedition to Sark took place on a Wednesday; Felix had intended to leave the next day, but was persuaded to stay till the following Monday and cross with the Lockwoods. As the day for leaving approached Amy grew more and more anxious about her debts; she felt almost sure the tradespeople would not let her leave the island unless she paid their bills, and this she could not possibly do.

The news must therefore come to Jack's ears, unless Felix

could help her ; even if he could not she would rather he was with her when her husband learnt how extravagant she had been ; so she persuaded her cousin to remain.

On the Saturday after the Sark excursion, Amy got up with a very heavy heart ; she must do her best that day to appease the tradespeople ; perhaps by dint of small sums on account and large promises of future payment she could keep them quiet ; and there still remained the hope that they had not heard she was leaving on Monday, but this was rather a forlorn hope, as the news was probably known through the servants.

"I must see how much I can get out of Jack ; I might manage with a hundred pounds, but if I get fifty from Jack I shall do well ; perhaps Felix can lend me the other fifty," thought Mrs. Lockwood as she went to Jack's smoking-room to ask for a cheque after breakfast.

"How much do you want?" said Jack, who was in a great bustle, as he pulled out his cheque book.

"Oh, as much as you can possibly spare me. I have several bills to pay," said Amy.

"I can let you have forty pounds ; that will leave us a balance of ten pounds for our travelling expenses till pay-day. Shall I make it payable to you?"

"No ; I hate going to the bank ; the clerks stare so. Make it payable to bearer, and I'll get Felix to cash it," said Amy.

Jack did so, handed his wife the cheque, and thought no more of the matter.

"Forty pounds. Why, four hundred would only just clear me," thought Amy, as she went to look for Felix to ask him to go to town with her. "I am going to pay bills," said Amy.

"Ah, I am glad to say I have no bills just now, but I have barely enough money to last me till my dividend comes in," said Felix casually, and Amy knew this last resource of borrowing from him was useless.

What was she to do ?

Forty pounds would not satisfy Janvrin alone, and she had at least six other importunate creditors.

Forty pounds ! and Jack said he had only another ten pounds in the bank. Surely he had made a mistake ; he must have more, and if he had he must give her more. She must confess

to a fourth of Janvrin's bill ; that would be better than letting Janvrin apprise him of the whole.

Jack would never forgive her if he found out—she owed so much money ; he had such a horror of debt.

"I will get his pass-book and just see what money he has ; he is very careless ; I daresay he does not know," she said to herself as she waited for the pony-carriage to come round.

She went into Jack's room, and opening a drawer in his writing-table found his pass-book lying there. She opened the book, and to her amazement found he had paid in the sum of four hundred pounds on the day she was at Sark.

She could hardly believe the evidence of her own eyes. Jack had told her, when she drew the forty pounds, it would leave a balance of ten pounds, instead of which he had four hundred and ten pounds still in the bank.

What could it mean ?

He could not possibly have made a mistake, neither could he have forgotten that he had paid in so large a sum ; for it was the largest amount he had ever paid in at one time.

Evidently he had meant to keep this money a secret from her. He did not choose her to know he possessed it. Possibly he wanted it for purposes of his own. Perhaps he, too, was in debt.

Where did he get this money from ?

From his mother, no doubt. He had a letter from her the day Amy was at Sark. Possibly it contained a cheque, but where old Mrs. Lockwood had got the money from Amy did not pause to inquire. All she knew was that her mother-in-law was not in a position either to give or lend her son so large a sum.

"Four hundred pounds, and then only to spare me a paltry forty," said Amy, as she slowly unfolded the cheque her husband had given her.

As she did so she noticed that in his haste Mr. Lockwood had forgotten to write the sum the cheque was drawn out for ; he had put forty pounds in figures at the bottom of the cheque, but the line on which he ought to have written the sum was blank.

And then the devil entered into Amy, and as he never comes empty-handed, he brought with him an idea, and the idea was to alter the cheque from forty to four hundred pounds.

"I could do it with a stroke of the pen—a nought after forty, and then write four hundred pounds in Jack's handwriting in the blank line. I have a great mind to do it. It would solve all my difficulties; and I really must have the money. We shall not be able to leave the island on Monday if I don't; we shall have half the tradespeople on the pier stopping us; and what a disgrace that will be if it gets known. I don't see any help for it. I must do it, and trust to Uncle John to lend me the money to repay it as soon as I get to England. Jack will know nothing about it; he never looks at his pass-book."

So thinking, Amy dipped a pen into some ink, and was about to alter the cheque when some one tapped at the door, and without waiting for an answer Felix walked in.

"Are you ready, Amy? The pony is at the door."

"I shall be in one moment. I am just looking out the bills I have to pay. Jump in and drive up and down till I come, Felix, will you? The pony won't stand. I shan't be five minutes," said Amy, feeling very guilty, although she was in fact still innocent.

"All right," said Felix, leaving her alone, and as the door closed Amy once more dipped the pen into the ink.

This time she did not hesitate; she was afraid of a second interruption, and, having carefully added a cipher to the forty pounds, she wrote four hundred pounds in the blank space in her husband's writing, finishing the line with a flourish, such as he always used.

"Splendid; it is exactly like Jack's writing, flourish and all," said Mrs. Lockwood, surveying her work with satisfaction. "Oh, what a weight it will be off my mind to pay all those wretched bills, and to give old Janvrin a set-down for his impertinence. Won't I ride over him this morning, the mercenary old wretch," she thought as she dried the cheque by shaking it to and fro, not on the blotting-paper, lest that should tell tales, and then she put it in her purse, gathered up her bills, put on her gloves, and went out to join her cousin.

She was in high spirits as they drove to the bank, and laughed and talked in her gayest manner. All she thought of was the delight of being relieved from her present difficulties. She told herself it was a providential dispensation that she had happened to look into her husband's banking book.

No qualms of conscience, no fear of detection, no dread of consequences at present troubled her. She could pay her bills without Jack knowing she had contracted any debts ; that was all she thought of.

"We must go to the bank first, Felix ; and I want you to go in and cash the cheque for me. I can't bear running the gauntlet of half-a-dozen bank clerks," said Mrs. Lockwood, as she stopped her pony at the door of the bank.

"All right," said Felix, taking the cheque, as Green jumped off the back-seat and went to the pony's head.

Felix unfolded the cheque as he went up the steps into the bank, but he paused at the door, and started when he saw the amount it was for, and returned to Amy.

"Amy, this is a very large cheque ; I think you had better come in with me. They may hesitate to give so large a sum to a stranger," he said.

"Oh, no, they won't ; it is payable to bearer ; besides you can tell them I am at the door if they do," said Mrs. Lockwood, who had her own reasons for wishing Felix to cash the cheque.

To the relief of Felix, the clerk seemed to think it was quite natural he, a stranger, should present so large a cheque, and when he remarked it was for his cousin, Mrs. Lockwood, who was at the door, the clerk replied :

"It is quite right, sir. Mr. Lockwood told me he should withdraw this sum very shortly,"

"It is a large sum for them to owe ; it is more than two-thirds of their income," thought Felix, as he rejoined Amy with a packet of bank notes in his hand.

The next hour was spent in driving about paying bills, and by the time this was accomplished there was very little change out of the four hundred pounds, but Mrs. Lockwood had the satisfaction of being out of debt, and of having been as haughty and insolent as possible to Mr. and Madame Janvrin.

"Now, Felix, I think we will send the carriage home and go to the market ; I want some flowers," said Amy.

In the market they met several acquaintances, all of whom were full of regret that the Lockwoods were going to England a few days before the ball at Government House, and of hope that they would be back in time for a large fancy ball to be given at Easter.

"Oh, yes, we shall be back long before then," said Amy confidently, little thinking she was destined never to spend another Saturday morning in the Jersey market or grace another Jersey ball with her presence.

As they were leaving the market, they met Miss Keppel, who looked very grave at first, but as Amy gave an account of her morning's work, her gravity changed to surprise, which she found it difficult to conceal.

"We have been paying bills all the morning, Aunt Sophy, and now I owe no man anything, and a most delightful sensation it is; it took all our money, though; Jack says he has only a balance of ten pounds till pay-day," said Mrs. Lockwood.

"They must be very much better off than I had any idea of if she has paid Janvrin," thought Miss Keppel, and when she had left her niece, her curiosity to know if Janvrin was really paid prompted her to go into the shop on pretence of looking at Miss Lydia's new hat.

Her curiosity was speedily gratified, Madame Janvrin was all bows and smiles, full of thanks to Miss Keppel for having introduced so good a customer as Mrs. Lockwood, and equally full of the most fulsome praise of that lady's beauty and charming manners, although Amy's manner to Madame Janvrin had purposely been as disagreeable as possible that morning.

For the rest of that day Mrs. Lockwood remained in high spirits; the bank closed at one on Saturday and did not open again till ten o'clock on Monday morning, by which time they would be well on their way to England, so there was no chance of her husband discovering her crime before they left Jersey.

Once in England she thought she could manage to borrow the money and repay it before Jack discovered she had drawn it; and if things came to the worst she must go to a money-lender and pay the interest out of her quarterly allowance.

For once in her life Amy did not sleep well that night; a guilty conscience is a very hard pillow, and she tossed and turned till day-break. In the night-watches she began to realize that she had committed not only a sin—that perhaps would not have kept her awake—but a crime, a crime punishable by law, by penal servitude, as she now for the first time remembered.

The very thought of such a thing threw her almost into a fever, but then she reflected Jack would never prosecute her; he

would hush the matter up for his own sake if not for hers, if he ever discovered it.

Oh ! but he must not discover it ; he must never, never know it ; she could never face him again if he did ; she would do anything rather than let it come to his knowledge ; she would run away from him and hide herself first ; nay, she would die first.

Death was horrible, but less horrible than disgrace.

Death was terrible, but less terrible than Jack's righteous anger.

Death was bitter, but sweeter death than to forfeit all hope of winning her husband's love.

Yes, yes, yes ; death, a thousand deaths, rather than let her husband know she had forged his writing and robbed him. Fool that she had been ; why, her extravagance was a venial sin in comparison with the crime she had just committed.

What should she do ?

Should she wake Jack and confess her crime and trust to his mercy ?

No, no, no ; she dared not do that ; he would scorn her ; she could not face his scorn ; she would die first ; again and again during the night she told herself she would die first.

Then another idea occurred to her ; she would deny the charge if she were discovered ; she would shift the guilt on to Felix ; he had cashed the cheque ; she would declare she had received but forty pounds, and she would alter the receipts she had taken that day to prove her story.

Poor Felix ! She was so fond of him too, but she was fonder of herself ; she must sacrifice him to save herself if need be.

But with the daylight, when she woke, after a few hours' sleep, came other thoughts ; she had been nervous and excited in the night and had over-estimated her danger, there was really no danger of detection. All she had to do was to borrow four hundred pounds in England as quickly as possible and pay it in to her husband's account.

She had committed no crime ; she had only borrowed of her husband, and there was no sin in a wife borrowing of her husband ; the strictest moralist could not object to that. True she had imitated his handwriting, but under the circumstances there was no sin in that ; it was to save him trouble ; he had forgotten to fill in the cheque, and there was not time to drive up to the Fort

for him to rectify the omission ; the fault, if fault there was, was Jack's.

How nervous she had been during the night. She must take a composing draught to-night or she would not be fit for the journey on Monday ; and so she did, for in spite of all her plausible arguments she was very restless and uneasy the whole day. Even Jack and Felix noticed it, but she ascribed it to her excitement at the prospect of going to England after two years' absence.

Monday morning dawned at last, and by half-past six o'clock, before daylight, they were on board the boat, and Amy breathed freely. As they steamed out of the harbour she felt as if she were leaving her crime behind her, like some horrible incubus of which she was free ; the fresh sea-breeze seemed to cool her excited brain, and as Jersey disappeared gradually from view, till at last not even the loom of the land was visible, so did the fear of discovery that was haunting her grow less and less, until by the time they reached Southampton she had forgotten all about it for the time.

They stayed that night in London, and the next day she and Jack went down to Oxburgh, leaving Felix under a promise to follow them in the course of a few days. Green and Rose, little Gladys, the baby and an under-nurse went with them, and somewhat to Amy's relief Jack insisted on taking Gladys in the same carriage with them ; as a rule she would have resented this, but on this occasion it averted a *tête-à-tête* and left her to pursue her own thoughts.

Joy was the centre of her thoughts during the journey. Was she in love with Major Graham ?

Had she forgotten Jack ?

Had Jack forgotten her ?

How would they meet ?

If she could be sure they were nothing to each other, she might hope eventually to win her husband's whole heart, and this was now the treasure Amy longed for above everything.

No triumph would be so great as this ; to supplant Joy as completely in his affections as she had supplanted her in their external relations ; to triumph inwardly as she had triumphed outwardly. She coveted Jack's love, for she was gradually waking to the consciousness that that alone could make life worth living. Jealousy is a sign of love, and she was jealous even of his love for

his baby-girl. If she saw a sign of lingering tenderness for Joy, her jealousy would be roused to a dangerous extent. She was not a woman to brook a slight nor to be scorned lightly, nor was she even yet aware of the strength of the passion now budding forth in her soul; but as they drew near to Oxburgh the thought of Joy drove all thought of her crime from her mind.

But little she thought detection was near at hand, but the Nemesis of evil sometimes travels apace.

CHAPTER XXIX.

OXBURGH HALL AGAIN.

JOY was altered; she had grown from a girl to a woman, in the two years and a half since her cousin Amy had seen her.

"Joy is aged," thought Mrs. Lockwood, but that was merely a feminine way of putting the fact that Joy had matured.

Of all the passions love has the greatest power of maturing character, and disappointed love acts quicker than any other phase of love.

"Joy is aged," was therefore Mrs. Lockwood's first mental comment on her cousin.

"Joy is unhappy," was her second.

This second criticism was no more true than the first had been, it was an exaggeration; Joy was not unhappy, she was simply not happy; it was a negative rather than a positive state. She was not happy because she was unsatisfied.

In accepting Major Graham, she had hoped that in time at any rate she could give him the wealth of love with which nature had endowed her; but as the days went on that time, instead of coming nearer, seemed to grow farther off, and the thought of her marriage was like a nightmare.

However, as that event was indefinitely postponed, she did not often think of it, but now that the first novelty of her engagement had worn off, it brought her no happiness, and Joy looked as she felt, indifferent and apathetic.

What her feelings for Jack Lockwood were, Amy, though she watched her narrowly the first few days they were together, could not tell; their manner to each other was simply that of friends, and the point of union between them was little Gladys, to whom Joy had taken a great fancy, much to the annoyance of The Captain, whose jealousy was aroused.

Sometimes The Captain condescended to join in the game of wolf, which went on in the billiard-room, where Jack Lockwood as wolf had his den under the billiard table, and crawled out on all fours after Joy with the delighted Gladys in her arms ; sometimes the dog sat and looked on with a sulky air of superior wisdom very refreshing to witness.

" I wonder you are not jealous of Joy, Amy," said the squire one morning a few days after their arrival, as he and she looked into the billiard-room to see the cause of the shouts of laughter which came from it.

" Why, Uncle John ? " said Amy, who would have been intensely jealous of Joy could she have found the slightest basis for such jealousy.

" Because Gladys seems so happy with her," said the squire.

" Oh ! Gladys is Jack's child entirely ; she never cared for me ; the boy is my delight," said Amy, relieved to find her uncle was alluding to the child and not to her husband.

" It is lucky for Rose Gladys is so good with Joy ; it gives her time to go and talk to poor old Perriam ; he looks years younger since she came back," said the squire, with whom the gardener's pretty daughter had always been a favourite.

" I hope he won't want Green and Rose to settle down here, for I think she will make an excellent nurse and we have never been so comfortable as we have since Green came to us," said Amy, as she and the squire crossed the hall on their way to the garden, whither they were bent. In the hall, however, they met Green with a telegram in his hand for his master.

Now telegrams were to the squire as a bone is to a dog. They amused him ; they excited him ; he delighted in them ; he could not rest until he had devoured their contents ; and as for going out for a walk without knowing if that telegram concerned him in the remotest degree, why, it was not to be thought of.

" A telegram for Mr. Lockwood. Here, give it to me, Green ; he is in the billiard-room. Amy, my dear, we had better go and see if it is important ; I hope it contains no bad news," said the squire, bustling back to the billiard-room.

" Oh no, Uncle John, it is only from the colonel, I expect ; he is so fussy, he will worry Jack's life out even on his leave," said Amy indifferently, but in her heart of hearts she was afraid lest the telegram contained bad news.

"We will go and see," said the squire, returning to the billiard-room, whither Amy's uneasy conscience induced her to follow.

"Lockwood, here is a telegram for you," said the squire.

The "wolf," who was on all fours pursuing Joy and Gladys, assumed an upright position at hearing this, and as he opened the yellow envelope, remarked as Amy had done:

"It is only from my colonel, probably."

But the next moment his careless manner changed to one of the greatest anxiety; the smile faded from his eyes; he knit his brows in perplexity, and turning very pale, muttered between his teeth:

"Impossible! There must be some mistake."

"Is there anything wrong?" said the squire, who was dying of curiosity to see the telegram.

"I—I don't know; it must be a mistake; I can't understand it unless—unless—but that is impossible too," gasped Jack, staring at the telegram and trying to read another meaning into the words.

"Whom is it from?" said Amy, dreading the answer.

"From Stanley Hyde," said Jack.

"Mr. Hyde, what can he have to telegraph to you about?" exclaimed Amy, a new fear taking possession of her.

"Only a matter of four hundred pounds," said Jack ironically, still puzzling over the message.

Amy felt her knees sink under her; she dropped on to a chair under pretence of intercepting Gladys, who was toddling from Joy to her father to implore him to resume the *rôle* of the wolf, while necessity made him play the part of the fleeced sheep.

"Is it bad news?" said the squire with itching ears.

"It would be ruin if it were true; but it can't be true; it is impossible; there is some mistake. I sent Hyde a cheque the other day, and he wires to say I have overdrawn; it is dishonoured and he can't cash it," said Mr. Lockwood.

"Is it possible you have overdrawn? Do you remember how much it was for?" said the squire.

"I should think I did. The cheque was for four hundred pounds; I only paid it in ten days or so ago," replied Jack.

A cry from Gladys, whom her mother was trying to entice on to her lap, interrupted the conversation, and seeing the child worried her father, Joy went forward and took her out of the room.

"Do you mean you drew out Mr. Hyde's cheque for four hundred pounds?" said the squire.

"Why, Jack, you told me you had only fifty pounds in the bank a day or two before we left Jersey," interrupted Amy, forcing herself to speak, though she felt ready to faint with fright:

"I had only fifty pounds of my own and I gave you a cheque for forty. The four hundred was Mr. Hyde's money; he won it at the club and asked me to pay it in to my account for a few days because he was going over to Paris and had not time to go home first with it. I did not want to do it, but I didn't like to appear disobliging, so I consented. What am I to do, Mr. Oxburgh? I must go over to Jersey to-night," said Jack.

"Telegraph to the bank to stop payment of all cheques, and to ask what your balance is, telling them to reply immediately," suggested the squire.

To Amy's intense relief, the squire and her husband left the billiard-room to send off this telegram, without noticing the effect the news had upon her; for on hearing the money was Mr. Hyde's her heart seemed to leap into her mouth; she felt her colour leave her, and it was only by an intense effort she prevented herself from fainting dead away, and so betraying her guilt.

She staggered to a window when she found herself alone, opened it, and gasped for breath. Her first thought when she could think clearly was that she had fallen into a trap deliberately set for her or Jack by Mr. Hyde. He had known of her debts, had guessed their inability to pay them and had purposely asked Jack to take care of this money, hoping he or she would be tempted to draw upon it to enable them to leave the island. And she had abetted him in his diabolical design of ruining Jack out of pique; for that he would spare Jack she knew was a wild hope: he would be only too eager to denounce him as a swindler.

As Jack said, it meant ruin if it were true, and, as she knew, it was only too true.

Jack would have to leave the army after this; no one would believe his story that he had given her a cheque for forty pounds, when a cheque for four hundred in his handwriting had been presented the same day by her cousin, unless indeed suspicion could be shifted on to Felix.

At first she seemed paralyzed, but she soon rallied, and strained every nerve to act so as to avert suspicion from herself.

The first thing to be done was to prevent Felix, who was expected the following day, from coming to Oxburgh; the next to get him if possible to Jersey, so that if suspicion fell on him he could be on the spot, and to these ends she went to her own room and wrote to Felix, telling him that Jack, who was in great trouble, was obliged to go over to Jersey that night, and imploring him to cross the next day and do what he could to help him. She added that it was a most serious matter, and unless properly managed meant ruin for Jack, and she had little doubt that Felix, who spent his time in going about the world doing good to others, would make it his first care to go and help his recent host in his trouble, though he did not know what it was. She had just finished this letter when Joy came to her room with the news that the reply to Jack's telegram had just arrived.

"Do you know what it is?" asked Amy, whose excited state was not lost upon Joy, though she attributed it at first to natural sympathy with her husband.

"Yes, it said the balance in the bank is only fifty pounds, so he has been robbed of three hundred and sixty pounds. But come down, Amy; he is getting an early lunch before he starts; he has to leave by the two o'clock express or he won't catch the boat," said Joy. Amy rose and followed her cousin to the dining-room, where Jack and the squire were discussing the matter as they ate their luncheon.

"Who cashed that cheque for you on Saturday morning, Amy?" asked Jack as she entered.

"Felix," said Amy.

"Ah! that is all right; I thought so. Now the question is, was the rest of the money drawn before or after that and by whom?" said Jack.

"And that you can't learn till you get to Jersey; if it weren't for the passage I would come with you and help you to run down the scoundrel," said the squire, who was never so happy as when chasing something, foxes or hares or otters; so the prospect of pursuing such big game as a scoundrel was delightful.

"Brave the passage and come, sir; it would be the greatest comfort to me, for it is a most serious matter, as you will acknowledge when I tell you the kind of man Hyde is," said Felix.

"Upon my word, I think I will. Joy, run up and pack a port-manteau for me while I go and tell your mother I am going," said the squire, unable to resist the man-hunt he promised himself.

Mrs. Oxburgh was not willing to let her husband go at first ; she was nervous about the passage, and it was such cold weather for him to travel ; she was nervous, too, at night when he was out, and she did not see the need for his undertaking so long a journey, but when she heard Jack wished to have the squire with him, as it was a matter of such vast importance to him, she consented, and the squire went.

He promised to send a telegram to announce their safe arrival on landing, and, as soon as the matter was satisfactorily arranged, to return.

The remainder of the day Amy endured torture ; she had an idea that Joy was watching her, and her guilty conscience suggested that she suspected her ; she was inwardly following the squire and Jack on their way to Jersey, and the nearer they drew in her imagination to St. Helier's the greater grew her fear. Perhaps they would call on Felix in London and learn from him that the cheque he cashed for her was for four hundred pounds instead of for forty ; in this case they would know of her guilt that evening. Oh ! horror !

But later on she dismissed this fear, after consulting "Bradshaw," and finding they would not have time to stop in London, but would barely catch the Jersey mail. At the earliest they could not even suspect her till the next morning, when they reached the bank, and then they might as reasonably suspect Felix as her. By dint of a great deal of acting—and Mrs. Lockwood was nothing if not an actress—she managed to maintain an outward demeanour exactly suited to the occasion ; a slight restlessness touched with anxiety and regret that Jack should be so worried during his holiday characterized her manner.

But on reaching her room that night, she threw off the mask she had been wearing with the rest of her clothes, and locking herself in, gave way to the despair she felt.

She threw herself on the rug in front of the blazing fire, and clenching her hands, dug them into the bearskin, beating on the ground with her little feet as she writhed in agony. Who that knew her would have believed her capable of so much feeling ?

Was this the calm, dignified, beautiful Mrs. Lockwood, the belle of all the balls?

Was this the graceful, charming, self-possessed woman, never seen in *déshabille*, actual or moral?

Yes; there she lay in her dressing-gown, her pretty hair streaming in disorder down her back, her little shoeless feet kicking against the pricks, her beautiful face hidden in the white fur of the hearthrug, as she moaned in her agony. She could have screamed aloud, but it would have betrayed her; so only stifled moans escaped her as she lay prone to the earth.

If it had not been for Joy, she thought, she could have borne it. She had come to Oxburgh, hoping to show Joy her husband loved her; she had come primarily to triumph over Joy. And now, as soon as her sin was known, Joy would scorn her; her aunt, her uncle—nay, the very servants would scorn her as a thief, a forger! worse than all, Jack, who had always respected and admired her—Jack, to gain whose love she felt she would make any sacrifice, now that her soul had awakened and she found she loved him—he would scorn her.

Never! Never! Never!

Death—death—a thousand deaths rather than live to be scorned by him!

She tortured herself by imagining how he would look when he heard she, his wife, had robbed him—had been guilty of forgery—had rendered herself liable to be arrested, prosecuted, tried, judged, sentenced, imprisoned, transported—touched, perhaps roughly, by common men and women, by policemen, by prison warders!

Live through that?

Never! Never! Never!

If he could survive such disgrace and degradation, she could not; she would not; she would die first.

She shrank from all physical pain. If she had a slight headache all the household was convulsed to minister to it; but rather any physical pain than such mental suffering as this.

Oh, fool! fool! fool that she had been to commit such a crime! And for what? To hide for a week the knowledge of her debts from her husband. To hide a fault she had committed a crime; to avoid Scylla she had wrecked herself on Charybdis; to avoid wetting her feet, she had jumped into the river; to escape mos-

quitoes she had run into the lion's den ; rather than scorch her face she had thrown herself into the fire.

What consummate folly !

And to aggravate her folly, here she was lying on her face, doing absolutely nothing to help herself.

She sprang up, shook out her hair, clasped her hands to her head, and thought intensely for a few moments.

What could she do ?

Nothing, absolutely nothing but await events.

Wait till Jack knew of her guilt ; wait till he was on his way back to Oxburgh ; wait till he was nearly there, and then—and then—and then—she knew what she would do.

There were plenty of things she might have done, had she not been almost paralyzed with fear, when she heard the news. She might have prevented the squire going to Jersey ; she might have hindered Jack from telling any one what had happened ; she might have borrowed the money and repaid it before her husband reached Jersey. But she had done none of these things ; all she had done had been to write to Felix, and that, on second thoughts, she had better have left undone.

He would only confirm her guilt, and the squire and Jack would never for one moment think of doubting his word. Felix certainly would do her more harm than good. The only thing he could perhaps do might be to raise the money to repay Mr. Hyde, and so prevent a public scandal.

And if he could, he would ; of that she was sure. But that would not make her position one whit more bearable. It was her husband's anger and scorn she dreaded. She did not care one atom, comparatively speaking, for the rest of the world. She did not seriously think they would allow her to be prosecuted ; they would hush the matter up for the family's sake, for Jack's, for hers.

It was not the vulgar consequences of her crime she feared ; it was the far more refined torture of meeting the husband she had learnt to love and had wronged so deeply.

But she would not meet him ; he should never see her again ; they had looked upon each other for the last time. This she told herself again and again that night, as she paced the room, or lay on the rug, or sat gazing into the fire, which she kept up all night.

Towards morning she took a sleeping draught and got into bed. She must have some sleep, or her haggard looks the next morning would betray her; for she was not a woman to pass a sleepless night for any slight cause, and Joy's great eyes would, she knew, scan her closely.

She slept late, and it was nearly twelve o'clock before she appeared downstairs, having had her breakfast in her room.

"There is no telegram yet, Amy, dear. I feel very anxious. I ought to have had one some time ago. The boat gets in by ten always, doesn't it?" said Mrs. Oxburgh, when Amy went to see her.

"Not always, Aunt Mary. There may have been a fog or a gale to delay it," said Amy, who felt respited.

Jack was perhaps still ignorant of her guilt; but as the day wore on and no telegram came, Mrs. Oxburgh grew so nervous and fidgety that, to calm her, Joy telegraphed to the Southampton Packet Office to ask if anything had happened to the Jersey boat.

The answer came as she and Amy were going in to dinner:

"Dense fog in Channel. Jersey boat last seen off Needles."

Perhaps the boat had gone down! Perhaps Jack was drowned! Perhaps he was lying cold and stiff, a prey to fishes, at the bottom of the Channel, and would never know of her guilt!

Did she hope it? Was the wish father to the thought?

She hardly knew. At any rate, it was a respite, and she felt like a condemned man when there is some hitch in the preparations for death.

The evening passed away, and no telegram came; and they all went to bed doubtful if the master of the house and his guest were safe or not. Had Amy lain awake that night every excuse would have been made for her, for her sleeplessness would have been attributed to anxiety for her husband; but she did not. Worn out with all she had suffered the previous night, and buoyed up with the hope, perhaps after all Jack would never know of her guilt, she slept like a top.

She was awakened the next morning by Joy, who rushed into her room exclaiming:

"It is all right, Amy. Mother has just had a telegram. The boat got in at half-past ten last night, too late to telegraph."

"Too late to go to the bank. He does not know it yet" thought Amy, as she got up and began her toilette, and wondered what that terrible day would bring forth.

CHAPTER XXX.

MISS LYDIA'S RELAPSE.

THERE are some people in this world peculiarly susceptible to zymotic diseases ; they are always catching some complaint ; they will tell you they have had measles four or five times ; whooping-cough three or four ; small-pox twice ; German measles, scarlet fever and chicken-pox at least once in the course of their lives.

There are other people a prey to imaginary diseases ; hypochondriacs these ; they live in a chronic state of suffering, of suffering which is real, though the disease is imaginary.

There are others who are constant victims to a certain disease which, whether it be real or imaginary, would puzzle doctors to say, for this disease is Love. Miss Lydia Keppel was peculiarly susceptible to this complaint ; from her youth up she had had an attack every year as regularly as the spring came round ; and now, though her youth was past, her age uncertain, her nature remained the same, and she was a constant sufferer from attacks of love.

The attack Felix Oxburgh had so unconsciously excited was a sharp one. On returning from Sark she had retired to her own room, and had remained there for a few days under plea of a bilious attack, removing her stays and solacing herself with Byron.

It was naughty to read Byron, Miss Lydia thought, and the vicar would reprove her for it when she paid her next private visit to the vestry, but it soothed her wounded heart as no other book would have done. So there she sat, limp and stayless in her dressing-gown, letting her mind disport itself unrestrained by conventional proprieties among the cantos of Childe Harold.

On the fourth day, which happened to be the day Felix left the island, she resumed her stays and her dress, and discarded Byron in favour of Adelaide Proctor and a poem called "Ezekiel," and went downstairs to rejoin her sister. Her romance was now touched with religion.

She found Miss Keppel very much exercised as to how Amy could possibly have paid Janvrin's bill before leaving the island. The good lady could talk of little else, though Miss Lydia could not even pretend to take the slightest interest in so very ordinary a matter. All she cared to know was that Felix had left Jersey ; actually left without saying a word more to her ; after having gone so far, so very far, as he had done—he had gone farther, even to England. And then Miss Lydia indulged some very profound reflections on the cruelty of men in general, and of Felix in particular, and wondered why she had been so peculiarly unfortunate in all her relations with the sex.

By degrees she rallied from this last attack, and at the end of ten days' day-dreaming, paid one of her periodical visits to the vicar, which seemed to afford her much support and consolation, though for the next few days she was seen to nod constantly and occasionally to drop a tear over the pages of "Butler's Analogy," which learned and logical work in its ponderous prose was suggested by Mr. Jimpson as a penitential antidote to Byron's poetry.

Then there came a day when all this was changed again ; a day on which Miss Lydia went to town and met in the flesh Felix Oxburgh. She would not have trusted the evidence of one sense only, but she had the extreme felicity of shaking hands with him and hearing his voice once more.

So when eyes, ears and hands all combined to substantiate the fact that he was once again in Jersey, she could no longer doubt it, incredible as it at first seemed ; the evidence of three senses could not be doubted.

Second thoughts, however, made everything clear. It was evident he had come back because he could stay away no longer. She was the magnet which had drawn him across the Channel again. No doubt he went to England, like the honourable man he was, to ask his father's consent to their marriage.

To be sure he did. Didn't he tell her his father was in Jersey, and he hoped to bring him out to Saumarez that day to see Miss Keppel ? There was scarcely a doubt as to what Mr. Oxburgh's business with Sophy could be ; it must be to discuss the marriage.

How cruelly she had misjudged Felix ! How foolish she had been to doubt him ! How impatient ! How undisciplined still !

What would Sophy say ? Poor Sophy, it would be very lonely

for her when both "her girls" were married ; but young people will be young people, and Miss Lydia, though no longer young as ordinary people count time, was so young in heart, she told herself, that she blushed and hastened home with a light springy step like a girl of seventeen.

How the whole world had changed for her in the course of that morning walk. She had set out with dull despair at her heart, no object in view, no object in life ; she returned with glad hope in her heart, marriage in view, and to live for Felix Oxburgh as her object in life.

Oh, happy, happy change ! Oh, beautiful Felix ! Oh, fortunate Lydia !

"I, Lydia, take thee, Felix ;" how well it would sound first intoned in Mr. Jimpson's deep voice and then faltered in her weak trembling tones.

"Felix Oxburgh, M.A., to Lydia, youngest daughter of the late John Keppel, Esq., J.P."

How well it would look in print.

What should she wear ? Would white satin and orange-blossom be too girlish ?

Sophy would say so, she thought with a sigh, and after all white is very trying to the complexion when the first flush of youth is over ; dove-coloured plush smothered with old lace would be more becoming.

Dear me, dear me ! there was no time to lose. She must be thinking about her trousseau ; she must set about it at once. She would make a list of things that very day. It would be a nice occupation till Felix arrived.

Dove-coloured plush and white lace yellow with age. Yes ; she should decide on that ; there was something poetical in the conception ; it was suggestive of a soft, gentle, timid, fluttering, cooing, dove-like creature like herself.

So she went home in high spirits, and spent the rest of the morning in making a list of the things she would want in her trousseau.

Just as she and Miss Keppel had finished luncheon, Jack's orderly appeared with a letter from Felix, saying he and his father wanted to see Miss Keppel on private business, of a delicate and painful nature, and would call the next day at three, as they were unable to get there that afternoon.

"What can they be coming about?" said Miss Keppel.

Miss Lydia blushed and simpered.

"A delicate and painful nature," repeated Miss Keppel.

Miss Lydia coughed, but was modestly silent. It did not become her to make any suggestions.

"It is a very delicate subject; painful, too, to poor Sophy to lose me," she thought.

"Have you any idea what they are coming about, Lydia?" said Miss Keppel, tipping up her gold spectacles and looking keenly with her bright eyes at her sister.

"I think I can guess," faltered Miss Lydia.

"Then you are cleverer than I am. I have not an idea, unless it is about Janvrin's bill; is that what you think, Lydia?"

"Janvrin's bill, Sophy! your head runs on that bill. I am going there to-day; if there is anything wrong about it they are sure to tell me, but I hardly think that is what Mr. Oxburgh wants to see you for."

"What do you suppose it is, then?" demanded Miss Keppel.

"I would rather not say, Sophy; I may be wrong," said Miss Lydia, with a self-conscious air her sister was too much preoccupied to observe.

She had no real doubt as to the object of Felix's visit the next day; it must be to propose to her and to gain Miss Keppel's consent, and on the strength of it she spent her afternoon in Janvrin's shop looking at under-linen, a large quantity of which she ordered to be sent home on approval.

The next morning Miss Keppel was astounded to see Janvrin's cart driven up to the house, and box after box, parcel after parcel taken out of it and carried up to Miss Lydia's room.

"Good gracious, Lydia! What is the meaning of all these boxes and parcels? Really one would suppose you were ordering a *trousseau*!" exclaimed Miss Keppel, walking into her sister's room, which was strewn with goods.

"They are only sent on approval, Sophy," said Miss Lydia, colouring painfully as a horrible dread seized her lest she had been somewhat premature in her preparations.

She would not like to show any unseemly haste in the preparations for her marriage. She would not like to do anything unmaidenly.

"Approval indeed! Why, you seem to have had the whole

shop sent up on approval! Either Janvrin is in his dotage or you are, I don't know which. Let me see what he has sent up. Why, good gracious me! here is a regular *trousseau*! petticoats, stays, handkerchiefs, under-clothing! What are you thinking of now, Lydia? I must insist upon knowing what all this means," said Miss Keppel sternly, as she shut the door and sat down facing her sister, with the air of one who would not be deceived.

Miss Lydia trembled; she could not confide in such a severe monitor as this, and how else could she justify her conduct?

"I wish you would wait till you have seen Mr. Oxburgh and his son," she faltered at last.

"Mr. Oxburgh! What can he have to do with all this under-linen?" exclaimed Miss Keppel, failing to see any connection between the squire and ladies' under-clothing.

Miss Lydia did not answer, but suddenly a light flashed upon the elder sister, and rising abruptly from her seat she rushed from the room to indulge in a fit of laughter.

"How I wish Dorcas were here," she muttered as she paused on the landing to wipe the tears from her eyes.

"Poor Lydia! Well, really! I did not think even she could have been so sublimely ridiculous. And a handsome fellow like Felix Oxburgh, too. Why, his mother is only a few years older than Lydia! Oh dear; oh dear! What would Dorcas have said?"

So thinking, Miss Keppel sat down to write to Mrs. Dobson and tell her of Lydia's last folly, a letter which the sequel proved was never sent. Meanwhile she racked her brains in vain to guess what the possible object of Mr. Oxburgh's visit could be.

Punctually at three o'clock the squire and Felix arrived, and Miss Keppel saw at a glance their business was serious, for they both looked very grave and anxious. She alone received them, Lydia modestly remaining in the library till she was sent for, in which room the little lady endured a small martyrdom of suspense.

After the greetings were over the squire plunged at once *in medias res*, only prefacing his story by the remark he had come on a very painful errand of a most delicate nature.

"The fact is, Miss Keppel, I am very much afraid our poor little niece Amy Lockwood is in a terrible scrape; my son and I are over here with Lockwood to see what can be done, and I

trust we may be able to hush the matter up ; but it is a dreadful business, terrible, terrible," said the squire, shaking his handsome head.

" Mr. Oxburgh, you terrify me ! What has happened ? Surely, surely Amy is with you at Oxburgh ? " exclaimed Miss Keppel, who began to fear Amy had run away with some one.

" Oh, yes, she is at Oxburgh. It is nothing of that kind ; it is a money trouble, but as disgraceful as an elopement would have been—almost worse, I am afraid," said the squire, guessing the current Miss Keppel's thoughts had taken.

" Money trouble ! Why, I happen to know Amy paid her bills before leaving the island ; one was such a large one I was surprised at her being able to do so," said Miss Keppel, who in attempting to defend her niece was unconsciously incriminating her.

" Do you happen also to know the amount of the bill you speak of ? " said Mr. Oxburgh, looking at his son, who had scarcely spoken.

" Not exactly, but it was over three hundred pounds, I know, for Madame Janvrin told me so herself, and I have been marvelling ever since where Amy found so large a sum, knowing as I do Mr. Lockwood has only his pay to live upon," said Miss Keppel, who was still far from suspecting the truth.

" Miss Keppel, I grieve to tell you how Amy obtained that money, but the truth is her husband gave her a cheque for forty pounds and she altered it to four hundred," said the squire, drawing his chair closer to his hostess and speaking in a low tone as he leant forward so that she might catch his words.

" Impossible, Mr. Oxburgh ! I cannot believe it ! Why, it is nothing less than robbery in plain English ! " exclaimed Miss Keppel.

" It is worse ; it is forgery ; she altered the cheque," said the squire.

At this point in the conversation Felix rose and went to the window, so that his back was turned to the squire and Miss Keppel. Not even Jack felt Amy's disgrace more keenly than he did ; that she was frivolous he had long known ; that she was untruthful he also knew ; that she would sacrifice others to gain her own ends he had also known, but that she could sink so low as this he could not have believed was possible. He would far rather have seen her in her grave ; the thought of death, in spite of all

its horror, was less loathsome to him in connection with his beautiful cousin than the thought of crime. He would rather have seen that beautiful face cold and stiff in death than the soul which animated it stained with crime. No more terrible thing than this could in his opinion have happened to the woman he had once loved and still regarded with tender affection. He shuddered inwardly as his father put Amy's sin into words; he would have taken the guilt on his own shoulders had it been possible rather than hear such terms as robbery and forgery applied to her actions.

"I *cannot* believe it; there must be some mistake," said Miss Keppel, turning very pale.

"Unfortunately, there is no longer any doubt; the only doubt was, what could she have done with so much money? And you have told us that. And my son here cashed the cheque, and was astonished at the amount," said the squire.

"How did Jack come to have so much money in the bank?" interrupted Miss Keppel.

"That is the worst part of it. It was not his money; it belonged to a man with whom we shall have some trouble before we have finished, I expect."

"What do you mean? It is not possible he can mean to prosecute her or Jack either. Why was I not told before? I would have advanced the money willingly to prevent any scandal," exclaimed Miss Keppel.

"No; there is no question of prosecuting—at least I trust not. The money has been refunded, and this gentleman paid already; but he is not inclined to hold his tongue about it, and we have yet to learn what effect it may have upon Jack's career. As soon as he is in possession of the whole truth he is going to lay the matter before his colonel, and ask his advice as to whether he must resign his commission or not."

Here Felix turned round and addressed his father, looking so handsome that Miss Keppel could scarcely repress a smile, even in the midst of her consternation, as she thought of Miss Lydia and her trousseau sent on approval. "Father, let me take the blame. I cashed the cheque. Amy still says it was only forty pounds. Let it be that I altered it to four hundred and pocketed the difference. There is a case against me, and no doubt Jersey can produce a lawyer to undertake it. I will make no defence;

“nay, I will plead guilty and take the consequences, to save Jack’s reputation and Amy’s character. If it were not for your sake I would have done so from the first, but I could not bear to break your heart ; but now that you know the truth, what is there to prevent me ?” said Felix, gaining courage as he went on with his proposal.

“Justice,” said the squire briefly, wiping his gold pince-nez and trying to look as if it were this clouded glass which made his sight dim.

“It will not be the first time the innocent has suffered for the guilty,” pleaded Felix, as though it were only a trifling thing he was offering. In reality he was offering something more precious than life itself, for the sake of the woman he once loved—even his honour, which many men have died to save.

“No, Felix, no ; it is too great a sacrifice. Don’t ask me to consent to such a thing. I could not hold my tongue and hear you, of all people, accused of such a crime,” said Mr. Oxburgh, speaking hurriedly and testily ; but, as Felix knew, the testiness was assumed to hide the emotion the squire felt.

“If you kept silence I would not, Mr. Oxburgh. Felix, I thank you with all my heart ; but you must not think of such a thing. Amy is guilty. She must take the consequences of her guilt, though I am willing to do all in my power short of what you suggest to avert those consequences,” said Miss Keppel, with more anger in her voice than she had shown throughout the interview.

“It seems incredible even now. I can’t conceive how she altered the cheque so cleverly, unless Lockwood by mistake handed her a blank cheque, and, even then, how could she imitate his writing so perfectly ?” said the squire.

“She would have no difficulty in doing that ; she can imitate any writing. To my certain knowledge she has done so twice before ; she falsified my census-paper once for a joke, and I could have sworn it was my own writing if the matter had not been too absurd ; and on another occasion she imitated my sister Dorcas’s writing so well as to induce her present husband, who knew her handwriting well, to come all the way from Africa to answer it. So I have no doubt Amy would be quite equal to altering a cheque or imitating her husband’s writing,” said Miss Keppel.

"Poor, poor Lockwood! Well, all that remains is for us to tell him what you have told us, and then let him lay the matter before the colonel; and we must do the best we can with this fellow Hyde," said Mr. Oxburgh as, after some further conversation, he at length rose to go.

Poor Miss Lydia! There she sat, watching the clock in the library, and hoping every moment to be sent for and the object of this visit, on so painful and delicate a subject, made known to her.

A quarter of an hour, half an hour, three quarters of an hour elapsed, and she was not summoned to the drawing-room. Was it possible Sophy was refusing her consent?

If so, Miss Lydia would marry without it; she would even forego dove-coloured plush and old lace, and elope, as Miss Dorcas had done, naughty as such conduct would be. She was no longer a child, to be controlled by Sophy. If need be, she would assert herself.

Just as she had reached this point in her meditations the drawing-room door opened and Felix and his father came out into the hall.

Were they coming to the library?

How should she ever face them both under such trying circumstances?

How inconsiderate of Sophy to allow Mr. Oxburgh to come as well as his son; she should have kept him in the drawing-room, and allowed Felix to be alone with—with, ahem—the woman of his choice, for a little while. But Sophy was so very proper; women of her age were apt to be prudish, especially if they were unmarried.

The footsteps came nearer—this was unavoidable if Mr. Oxburgh and his son wanted to get out of the house, for the library was close to the hall-door, but it completely upset Miss Lydia's equanimity.

Trembling and blushing, she jumped up from her chair, and skipping lightly to the window, hid herself behind the curtains. She could not face them both—her future father-in-law as well as her *fiancé*, for such she somewhat prematurely considered Felix. No, she really could not; it was such a very awkward position to place her in.

So she placed herself in an equally awkward position, as far as

locality was concerned, with a draught from the window cutting her in two as she hid behind the curtain, one little white delicate hand grasping the heavy damask to let Felix see his charmer was coyly awaiting him.

But, alas! for Miss Lydia. Felix followed his father past the library door, out into the garden, without so much as pausing on the threshold; nay, if the truth must be told, without so much as a thought of the silly little woman hidden behind the curtains.

What could it mean? They appeared to have gone out of the house! Surely her ears had deceived her! It was impossible! Sophy had not rung the bell for the servant to open the door; they could not possibly have left the house.

Before Miss Lydia had sufficiently recovered from her consternation to emerge from her retreat behind the curtains, the library door opened and Miss Keppel walked in.

"Lydia! Where are you? What are you doing behind the curtains?" she exclaimed.

"Nothing," said Miss Lydia feebly.

"Come out, then, and now that Mr. Oxburgh has been and gone, go and send all that *trousseau* you have had sent on approval back to Janvrin; Mr. Oxburgh's business with me was not what you were so silly as to imagine. When you come downstairs I will tell you what he came for," said Miss Keppel, looking so preternaturally grave that Miss Lydia felt her own folly was not enough to account for this gravity.

She went upstairs slowly and sadly, with a dull weight on her heart as she mused on the cruelty of Felix's conduct.

"Oh, men! men! men!" she thought, "you are all alike; all heartless; all cruel; all have one favourite toy, a woman's heart; the tenderer it is the more you delight in battering it."

So musing she reached her bed-room door, but on opening it the scene which met her view quickly changed the current of her thoughts from the channel it was flowing slowly and sadly along, among men, to another channel, where it bubbled and rushed wildly along, among dogs.

The inevitable puppy had found its way into her room, and had been having a delightful romp among her bandboxes, the contents of which were strewn about the room; half-a-dozen fine cambric handkerchiefs were torn to shreds, another half-

dozen were too much damaged to be returned to the shop; one or two frilled petticoats were also spoilt; altogether Miss Lydia found the puppy's game and her own folly would cost her between two and three pounds.

However, there is a silver lining to every cloud, and Miss Lydia was not sorry to be obliged to take the handkerchiefs and the petticoats, after having had so many things sent up on approval. Janvrin, at least, could not have the laugh against her; so she packed up the undamaged articles and sent a note, she took care Miss Keppel never saw, to say she would take the others.

And that once the puppy went, unpunished, Miss Lydia contenting herself with unspoken reproaches as she restored her room to order; her heart would take longer to recover its normal condition; meanwhile her curiosity as to the delicate nature of Mr. Oxburgh's visits turned her thoughts into another channel, and hurried her descent to the drawing-room and the prose of daily life, after her last brief ramble in the regions of poetry.

(To be continued.)

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A Third Person.

By B. M. CROKER,

Author of *PROPER PRIDE*," *DIANA BARRINGTON*," *TWO MASTERS*,"
'INTERFERENCE," *'A FAMILY LIKENESS*," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXV.

MANDALAY.

MEANWHILE, Roger Hope had arrived in the East, had joined his regiment, as it marched down country, and embarked with his company at Calcutta, *en route* for Upper Burmah. At Rangoon, the city of the golden pagoda, the troops re-shipped on board a flat river-boat, the "Tavoy," and proceeded up the Irrawaddy to the town of Mandalay. The town of Mandalay was now British territory, and one aspect of the war was over. The king and his amiable consort were in exile, there were no battles to wage or fortresses to storm, but there was an evasive and deadly enemy in the shape of dacoits hidden away among the tangle of bamboo forests, that had yet to be extirpated. The Irrawaddy was not new to Roger Hope, nor were the size and appetites of the maddening mosquitoes, nor the frequent pagodas, luxuriant elephant grass, or forests of palm that bordered that headlong river ; that important stream, that represents a main artery between Europe and China ; that impetuous torrent, into which, if a man falls, his chances of escape are small ; its cruel under-current will clutch him in its deadly grasp, and refuse to release him till it has carried him for twenty, ay, for two hundred miles ; that greedy river, that, after the melting of the snows, cuts out fresh courses year by year, voraciously eating away the sandy banks, that tumble into his capacious swallow, and are no more seen.

In the full tide of the Irrawaddy, the curiously built native

boats, with their carved sterns decorated with a row of soda-water bottles, and their broad brown sails, move swiftly down, outstripping, with a fair wind, the steamers of the Irrawaddy Flotilla Company, bearing the produce of the upper districts to the markets of the south ; great flocks of wild geese and duck, sweep across the river and settle upon some distant hidden lagoon, far away from the track of man ; and graceful cranes, elevated on their long legs above the crops, snow-white paddy birds, and egrets, are conspicuous points in the landscape.

The Irrawaddy steamer "Tavoy" swung into her berth at the south shore, just as the last sounds of the dress for parade bugles of the 100th Madras Infantry were dying away, and the hum of the bazaar was rising louder and louder as the sun rose higher and higher. Down the gangway planks filed a thousand men of the East Wessex, forming up with precision on the baggage-strewn wharf.

The palace of the ex-king was their destination, the centre of which was known to all loyal Burmans as "the centre of the universe," and was surmounted by a ball of glittering silver and crystal, which stood out in bold relief against the dark background of the distant hills.

Away they marched up the long straight road, through clouds of blinding dust, thick and choking, till the landscape was blurred and yellow, and only the feathery tops of the palms were visible to the weary troops.

Mrs. Baggot, with all her sharp sight, would have been puzzled to recognize her nephew in his Karki suit, with brown leather accoutrements, or to distinguish him from the thousand travel-stained soldiers who were treading the soil of a new country for the first time, a soil that would offer them—how many graves ? Across the moat, through the ponderous gateway, in the thick walls beneath which lay the bodies of many a victim of barbarous sacrifice—victims to dark and mysterious intrigues, whose tragic fate was rarely known beyond the precincts of the palace.

Now and then a thrilling whisper of murderous deeds, would stir the gaily-dressed, merry frequenters of the great bazaar. Chattering girls with flowers in their sleek hair, and cheroots in their mouths, would shake their heads and mutter to one another in serious under-tones, but in a day or two the rumour would die away, forgotten in the ceaseless round of business and pleasure.

The palace, the royal residence, stands inside the fort, and consists of several grand pavilions, gorgeous with carving, gilding and red paint. One of these, contains the king's throne, over which towers a spire of immense height, its pinnacles glittering with mirrors, a landmark for many miles. The elaborate carved and gilded roofs and interiors remained, but gone was the barbaric court, the *pooyas*, music, massacres and dancing, the tittering ladies-in-waiting, the trembling victims and the splendid, gaudy furniture, all had given place to a different race and a different *régime*. Red tape reigned in the king's summer-houses, a telegraph Baboo occupied the centre of the universe, the rude, but useful charpoy, took the place of expensive western upholstery. And nought remained as a memorial of tragic scenes of bloodshed, but the impress of a woman's hand on the lintel of the door of the queen's audience hall, when, murdered by the ruthless Soupialah, she had clutched with her gory fingers, the slippery pillar of gilded teak.

The head-quarters of the Wessex, were established at the Golden Pagoda, a magnificent specimen of the fantastic wood-work peculiar to Burmah. In the compound, were dwarf palms and waving plantains, and from the steps one obtained a splendid view of purple mountains, the sacred hill of Mandalay with its thousand pagodas, its tinkling bells and countless Bhuddist shrines. It seemed to Roger Hope almost a desecration, to occupy such a place, to loll in long chairs in the holy of holies, and to behold one's domestics cooking at the foot of the sacred steps, whilst the smoke from their hookas blackened the calm face of Bhudda.

However, such are the exigencies of war, and habit soon became second nature. After a time the splendours began to pall, and familiarity had its way.

For the capital of a recently annexed country Mandalay proved a surprisingly civilized station ; in interludes of transport and convoy duty, of dacoit chasing, and dacoit catching—two totally different things—there was polo, racing, cricket, paper-chasing and concerts ; the ladies were conspicuous by their absence, but the garrison bore up manfully and amused themselves with astonishing success. There were evening entertainments, in an old *kyoung* in the mounted infantry lines which were much appreciated ; the bands of various regiments played selections, and those who were gifted, sang to their fellow-creatures such songs

as : " Rolling from the Canteen," " Be kind to your Dog," " Here upon guard am I," and " Close the Shutters, Willie's dead." These were frantically encored ; the last especially was even more popular than " Finnigan's Wake." It is a curious fact, that nothing appeals to the taste of Tommy Atkins like a long and truly melancholy ditty—the longer and the more lachrymose it is the more it is enjoyed.

In response to a sporting challenge, a team arrived from Myingyan to do battle in Mandalay, and to make a week of it, the week to include contests in racing, shooting, polo, billiards and tennis ; there were royal dinners, and friendly greetings, and exciting lotteries. No outsider would suppose at the first glance that the garrison and their guests were in the heart of a strange and lawless country, and liable to be decimated by fever, cholera, and dacoits.

Roger Hope took things quietly, he had been in Burmah before ; these pagodas, with their merry worshippers, this luxuriant vegetation, these rushing rivers and impetuous hill ponies, were all familiar to him. He was not in his old spirits, for some mysterious reason, no longer the life and soul of the mess (quite the contrary) ; however, at the present moment, his mantle appeared to have fallen on a certain Mr. Toby Winn, who had accompanied the competing team from Myngyan—more in the character of guest and backer, than a champion for the lists. The first time Roger encountered him, he was merely aware of the top of a head covered with somewhat wild light brown hair, and two long legs, visible from the back view of the Bombay chair, in which Mr. Winn sprawled ; the chair was surrounded by half-a-dozen delighted listeners, and the head was in course of being refreshed by a cigarette, and a pint of iced champagne.

" Who is the fellow ? " inquired Roger, who had been on duty all the morning, and was hot, thirsty and dusty, and not in a festive frame of mind.

" Winn, Toby Winn. Have you never heard of him ? " rejoined a brother officer. " He is the best fun out—an awfully clever chap. I must ask him to dine with me to-night," and he hurried away to secure his prize.

" Winn," supplemented a grizzled field officer, sinking into a low cane chair near Roger, " is undoubtedly clever—much too clever for *our* young fellows."

"What do you mean, sir?" inquired the other, as he removed his helmet and wiped his hot forehead; he had been having an exciting morning, with a batch of untrained pack bullocks.

"He won four hundred rupees from that young ass Jones, at poker, the night before last, and unless I'm mistaken, he has plucked little Peter Poole to his last feather. Peter's two ponies are in the market."

"And who is he when he is at home?"

"There it is; he has no home. At one time he says he hopes to get into the Bombay and Burmah Trading Company; at another, he is trying for the police. Meanwhile, he is the scourge of small detachments, a gentleman loafer, with lots of brains, a good address and any amount of cheek."

"Evidently," returned Roger dryly. "I saw him looking at the brand of the champagne just now, and asking if it was all right?"

"He comes and sponges on young fellows at isolated posts. Knowing the proverbial hospitality of soldiers, he lives upon them, drinks their liquor, rides their ponies, borrows their rupees, and then gets passed on like the queen in Old Maid. No one who knows him, for what he is, cares to keep him long."

"But who is he?" reiterated Hope impatiently.

"He is a gentleman by birth, and has been to a public school, and all that; how he has drifted up here I cannot tell you, but on the whole, he makes a good thing out of it. I don't believe his name is Winn, no more than it is mine; but, not being in the service, we can't look him up. Now he has come here, he will exploit Mandalay till it is too hot to hold him."

"He must be a regular young scoundrel," muttered Hope.

"He has his followers, his worshippers, I can tell you. He is such an amusing beggar, tells a good story, draws a good caricature, does marvellous tricks on cards, is as active as a cat, and will ride any animal that has four legs. I've known fellows that he has let in, declare that his company was worth *double* the money, and he is such a plausible chap, they say you believe every word he says when he is talking to you."

The subject of these remarks, having finished some amusing narrative, which sent his audience into roars of laughter, now suddenly rose, stretched himself in a leisurely fashion and faced about. He wore white flannel trousers, and a gaudy striped

blazer (possibly borrowed); he was tall, fair and broad-shouldered; there was not a hair upon his smooth shrewd face; his eyes, set close together, were twinkling, keen, and small, and he had General Yaldwin's nose.

Yes; he was not a Standish, but unmistakably a Yaldwin. Here was Hubert the squandering, idle ne'er-do-well. Despite the extent of Burmah, Roger had come across Rose's brother after all.

"I say, Hope, will you have a game of rackets this afternoon?" inquired a wiry-looking major.

Hope's eyes were still fixed on the so-called Toby Winn, and Toby, as he heard the name, started perceptibly, met his gaze point blank, surveyed him with a long glance of cool scrutiny, and then turned, and dipped his casual hand, into an open cigar-box.

It was plain to Roger, that the young impostor recognized him.

That same evening Toby, the popular darling, dined at mess, and Captain Hope, who was on duty, subsequently noticed him playing whist, and deeply immersed in the game. He stood and looked on for some time. Toby was a real born gambler, backing his luck heavily, and betting on the cards. He was pale with excitement, and as he tossed back his hair with an impatient motion, the scar on his forehead was the seal of his identity.

"How could he afford these sums?" thought his indignant spectator. "He had no settled income, no occupation. Even by lamp-light his dress clothes looked seedy and his linen frayed and worn. Yet he carried on gallantly with many a rupee note, and many a joke, and many an answering laugh. No, no; he was not in the least like Rose," concluded Hope after a steady inspection; "he was merely a young, rowdy and ridiculous caricature of his grandfather, the general." At one o'clock Roger retired to his quarters, leaving the prodigal delighting his audience with music hall songs, and imbibing strong drinks, at their expense.

On the table in his own apartment and in full light of his kerosine lamp, lay an official letter. Hope tore it open. It was, as he had expected, an order to start in command of a party for service up the Chindwin within twenty-four hours. On the whole he was glad. He was weary of gilded Mandalay its

palace, and lily-sprinkled moat ; he preferred some rougher quarters, and a more exciting life. This extraordinary combination of East and West, of rations and small books, of idols and polo, of pay sergeants and yellow-clad priests, confused his imagination, and he preferred the simple and primitive jungle, where a puppet pooay, and a badminton party, were not likely to clash on the same afternoon.

Before starting, he had a word with Toby Winn, who sauntered up to him with a cheroot in his mouth, as he stood on the palace steps, and accosted him thus :

" I say," removing his cheroot, " isn't your name Hope ? And haven't you relations in that beastly hole, Morpingham ? "

" Yes."

" Well, then, I've often heard of you, and I expect you've heard of *me*, but mum is the word. How was Rose when you saw her ? "

" Very well."

" And the old boy ? As hard as a nail—no sign of breaking up, eh ? "

" No, not the smallest," with unsympathetic emphasis.

" And so you are off to Yin Mu at daybreak ? "

" Yes, but before I go, tell me—can I do anything for you ? "

" No, no—thanks awfully. I'm in clover here, and I'm just knocking about and seeing life, and all that sort of thing. By-and-by, when my grandparents are gathered to the family vault, I shall be a rich man. Don't be surprised, if some day I look you up. I daresay I shall get sick of Mandalay sooner or later—or it will get sick of *me*," he added with a laugh, and nodding an airy good-bye, he strutted off with his hands in his pockets.

CHAPTER XXVI.

" TO GET YOU TO BURY ME."

THE detachment commanded by Captain Hope, consisted of a subaltern (Mr. Jones), five non-commissioned officers, fifty rank and file, a native apothecary and the usual train of camp followers and baggage ponies. They were bound for a small isolated post, about sixty miles north of Mandalay, in the centre of a district notorious for dacoits. They crossed the Chindwin in unwieldy country boats, and pursued their march without adventure, forcing their way through narrow forest paths and

thick undergrowth of heavy jungle, surprising and searching suspected villages and halting at night by some tumble-down *zayat*, or rest house, or beneath the shadow of a venerable pagoda.

On the fourth day they reached their destination, a *kyoung* (or priest's house), which they fortified at once by a strong bamboo stockade. It stood on low swampy ground, not far from the whirling, swirling Chindwin, and its position had been chosen more for strategical purposes than salubrity. It was close to a dense belt of forest, within view of the blue Shan hills and a stone's-throw of a friendly village. After the rains the villagers could tell how the deadly mists would rise from the rice fields, the poisonous miasma from the marshes, and the cruel white fog from the river. In a very short time the troops were settled in their new quarters, and Roger and his comrade had made their home in the old *kyoung*, with its teak walls and carven roof. The humane creed of the Burman prevents him taking life, however *small*, and the previous occupants were undoubtedly Buddhists of the strictest sect. Escorting convoys and hunting dacoits was the chief duty of the little force, waiting and watching for opportunities that never seemed to come, traversing miles of jungle in pursuit of phantom foes. It was exceedingly difficult to follow up dacoits, owing to their accurate knowledge of the jungle paths, and astonishing capabilities for getting over an immense tract of country in an incredibly short space of time. From their fastnesses in the Yaw mountains they swooped down on villages, whilst on the Chindwin itself the country boats, laden with rice and tamarinds, fell an easy prey to armed Burmese, who, from behind some sandy spit or lofty screen of reeds, darted out in their canoes in the shape of pitiless pirates. Stretching towards the hills were dense forests of palm, endless scrub thickets of prickly pear and cactus, interspersed with paddy fields and tracts of arid soil. Sometimes the searchers came upon the still smoking ashes of a camp fire, and now and then upon that most hideous spectacle, the victim of a crucifixion. Roger Hope, strolling alone, far from camp, one evening, with his thoughts in another hemisphere, became suddenly aware of a deadly noisome odour, which loaded the air already heavy with decaying vegetation. There was a slowly rising dark mass, a sound of flapping wings. The branches overhead were covered

with vultures—vultures in hundreds, tearing, rending and fighting around—what? A strange object that made a ghastly outline against the sky—a crucifixion. On a frame of bamboo, and bound with cords, was the body of a man, a horrible object. By the dim light Hope saw that the victim had been slashed with a knife, and on the breast, firmly driven in by a stake, was a piece of paper, on which was scrawled in Burmese: "This is how we treat those who serve foreigners." The unfortunate wretch, whose remains shook and swung above, was evidently a letter-carrier, some miserable villager who, for a rupee or two, had run the risk of capture and death. At the foot of the scaffold, lay an empty post office-bag, slit open and rifled. No wonder that letters were rare, if this was the fate of her Majesty's mails.

Shway Yan was said to be in the neighbourhood. He was the scourge of all peaceful inhabitants wherever he showed himself, for, despite a handsome price upon his round bullet-head, he had still a large following of Thebaw's disbanded army. Wherever he went his course was marked by massacres, and burning villages. And now a determined effort was about to be made to capture him, and half of the small detachment at Yin Mu, was drawn off to swell this force. Roger felt lonely when his comrade marched gaily away in command of the party, promising to return with the Boh's head on a charger. The evenings seemed desperately long now, as he sat in his dark solitary kyoung, endeavouring to read an old paper, or to write letters (that were likely to be lost in the post), by the light of his hurricane lantern.

It was all very peaceful; the village was still; there was nothing to be heard but the challenge of the sentry and the tap tap of the native watchman as he he beat the hours of the night on his hollow drum. Underneath were the picket telling stories and smoking the while; and in the rear, the Indian servants enjoyed their hukas, and discoursed of their pay, their savings and their far-off homes.

One night there was a sudden wild alarm. A spy arrived breathless; Shway Yan and his followers were but a short distance behind. Shway Yan, who had been sought so long, hearing of the reduced garrison, and of a (fabulous) chest of money, was coming to slaughter the strangers, to carry off their arms, ponies

and treasures, and to sell their servants as slaves to the wild Chins.

As if by magic, there was an end to smoke and song ; rifles were loaded, ammunition got handy ; the stockade was strengthened by sacks of rice and flour ; the ponies were driven under shelter ; this was all the work of a very few minutes. The little garrison waited in grim expectation, and they had not long to wait. Soon there were sounds of many hurrying footsteps and a crack of musketry, horns, conches bells, jingals, burst upon them like a tempest ; and above all, the wild yell of the armed Burman on the war-path. The stockade was closely surrounded, but the Wessex were desired to reserve their fire, until seemingly hundreds of broad swarthy faces swarmed above the paling, and then they gave them a well-directed volley, which threw the foe into confusion. The faces that fell, with screams, were replaced by others as fierce—faces with dahs between their strong teeth. And from every aperture in the stockade came a fusillade. Luckily the muskets were ancient and rusty, the shooting erratic, whilst the invested force fired steadily, and with terrible precision. Hope's revolver was almost red hot from constant discharge, and he and his, though as ten to one, were holding their own well. How it might end, it would be hard to say ; the light was bad the dacoits were in multitudes, fought savagely, and kept themselves now well under cover. They threw lighted rags and branches into the inclosure to set fire to the sacks ; they were endeavouring to force the weakest side of the stockade. The shrieks, yells and curses, stifling smoke, and slashing dahs, were at the climax. A straw might turn the tide one way or the other. Tommy Atkins, wounded, and fierce, and blackened with smoke and blood, fought sternly on. He was prepared to sell his life dearly—when the tide suddenly turned his way. A huge Burman, flushed with anticipated victory, with a gorgeous silk handkerchief bound round his head, scrambled on to the roof of the kyoung. As he stood for a second against the sky, he offered a magnificent mark. Roger Hope raised his revolver, took steady aim, and shot him through the brain. With one piercing yell he fell, rolled heavily down the roof, and pitched headlong among his enemies, stone dead ; yes, quite dead.

This event was succeeded by a sudden cessation of hostilities. The firing ceased ; there was evident consternation among the

attacking party ; and then it dawned upon the troops, that the enemy had lost their leader ; that this stalwart Burman, with the rich silver dah, and double-barrelled pistols, and splendid silk putsoe, who was lying motionless at their feet, was none other than the notorious Shway Yan. Yes, it must be, and they set up a ringing cheer. Ere the cheer had died away, the dacoits had melted into the forest, carrying off their wounded and leaving their dead upon the field. Seventeen corpses lay outside the stockade, mostly killed by a small dark puncture, where the conical bullet, had found its billet.

The defenders' casualties were comparatively small ; two men badly wounded, some ugly dah cuts, one camp follower, and two ponies killed.

The next morning the dead Burmans were buried at some distance by the villagers, and there was great bell-ringing and jubilation, and dancing and feasting over the capture of the Boh. The reward of five hundred rupees, set upon his head, was subsequently divided among the gallant defenders of what was now known as "the sixth, or Hope's stockade," and after a storm there ensued, as usual, a great calm.

Life was monotonous ; the dacoit chasing was practically at an end, and sport in the neighbourhood was poor ; a few peacock, a tree partridge or a barking deer, or more often an empty bag, was the result of a long day's tramp. As for society, there was none beyond the friendlies in the village ; the smiling, smoking, gambling Burmese, to whom life is (if possible) all play and no work, would gladly have entertained the white officer, and feasted him with a meal of succulent ants, the odoriferous napie, or other edibles of a doubtful or indigestible description, or entertained him with dancing and discordant songs, but none of these delights appealed to Hope ! And now the climate began to live up to its reputation. The low, creeping white mists, rose stealthily over the land, and sickness seized on almost all the detachment ; it was the worst type of deadly malarial fever, that saturated the district, and proved a far more dangerous enemy than an armed force, and the apothecary was one of the first to succumb. So short-handed were they that Captain Hope himself occasionally took his turn as sentry. He gazed enviously on the distant Shan hills, well aloof from the swamps and pestilential agues of this overheated and unhealthy country ; how he wished that his poor fever-stricken

men were in that cool region. One evening as he stood outside the stockade watching a blood-red sunset, he was aware of an object crawling towards him, a very old man, in ragged European clothes, almost bent in two; on nearer approach, he recognized that it was not, as he supposed, an aged person, but Hubert Yaldwin, bowed down by fever, disease and want.

"Ah!" he murmured, in a weak, husky voice, "I told you I'd look you up some day. I've come"—making an effort to straighten himself, and surveying Roger with dim eyes—"to get you to bury me."

"What nonsense!" expostulated the other. "You are not as bad as all that yet. Come in, come in, and we will see what we can do for you," and taking him by his skeleton arm he gently led him into the kyoung, and placed him on a chair.

"You can do nothing for me, but let me die in peace," was his reply, and, indeed, when Roger looked at him closely, he read death in large letters, written on his drawn, emaciated countenance.

He was merely skin and bone; his feet were bare and bleeding, his clothes in rags; altogether he was in a pitiable condition. His host lost no time in procuring beef tea and a little brandy (a precious medical store). Hubert gulped it down with avidity, then a piece of tough chuppaty; it was painful to watch him, his hunger was wolfish. Bathed and dressed in Hope's clothes, he lay back in the chair with pillows behind him, and with a long sigh of contentment announced that he felt better.

"I am always at home in another fellow's garments," he remarked with a faint laugh. "I've worn out several outfits that were never got for *me*. Yes, I'm better, but you need not be afraid, I'm not going to get well; and a good job for every one."

"Not for your sister, at any rate," protested Hope.

"She has always been a fool about me."

"How did you make your way here?"

"Oh, I can talk Burmese, and I got a cast in an empty rice boat, and then I fell in with a convoy party, after that I lost my way; I've been six days in the jungle, living on prickly pear fruit, sleeping on the ground—and seeing horrors. I got into a scrape at Mandalay, and I had to make a bolt of it; I knew I was at the end of my tether, and I felt very seedy and so I came to you, for it will be a comfort to Rose to know that I died on your hands. I've been a bad boy, as you may guess; if I had had lots of money

and gone into the service I daresay I'd have been a rattling good fellow ; but as it was, I never got a fair start. What's fifty pounds ? that's all the old gentleman gave me, and minus his blessing. As it is, I've lived on my wits for five years, and now I've come to the end of them, and"—dropping his voice—"of everything."

"Oh, I say ; come, you must not talk like this ; I'm a fairly good nurse, I will patch you up yet, and get you down the river to Rangoon—and, maybe, home."

"Not you ! you'll never get me farther, than a little mound under a dwarf palm, outside the stockade. Bury me with my face towards England, will you ?"

"I wish to goodness you would not talk like this," said his listener impatiently. "Why should you give up the ghost in this way ?"

"Oh, yes, I must talk, and make the most of my time. You speak of patching me up, you don't look very fit yourself ; your eyes are like two holes burnt in a blanket ; you have got the fever. I know this place by name ; it is a pestilential hole at this season. When Thebaw wanted to get rid of a minister quietly, and without the fuss and ceremony of a public execution, he just sent them *here* on some fool's errand, and in a month he was safe to be dead—and I'm safe to be dead, long before that—safe to be dead—safe to be dead," he repeated drowsily, and turning his head from the light he fell into a fitful slumber, murmuring, "Safe to be dead."

In spite of the most assiduous care, yea, though the milk of the only cow was annexed, though every remaining fowl in the village was slaughtered and boiled into broth, Hubert's hold on life relaxed day by day. He became extremely restless and had his charpoy (or rather Roger's) daily carried out into the verandah, as he hated the dark interior of the kyoung, and there he lay, tossing from dawn till sunset, sometimes sleeping, but more frequently looking out upon his surroundings, with weary, regretful eyes.

"I like to be in the daylight," he whispered ; "in the warm sunlight as long as I can, for I'll soon be in darkness—darkness. You'll tell Rose ; she will be sorry. My real name and all about me are written on a scrap of paper in my tobacco pouch ; it's the only thing I possess, and do you keep it. I wrote my name and

where I came from, long ago, in case I went out suddenly and they never heard at home."

All one noon he lay in a half-unconscious state, holding Roger's hand in his ; at sundown he started up with a final flicker of life, looked wildly around him, and shouted to the sentry, in a loud, clear voice :

" Quite right to present arms ; but you should always reverse arms, when you see a corpse going past you," and fell back dead.

He had barely breathed his last, when the merry countenance of Lieutenant Jones and a reinforcement of thirty men of the Wessex regiment, presented themselves at the stockade, to the great joy of their comrades. Lieutenant Jones' jovial expression faded suddenly, when he saw the dead body of Winn, with the sheet drawn over his wasted form, and it seemed to him, that his friend Hope was in a fair way to follow the gentleman loafer. He was in high fever and quite light-headed. What did matter-of-fact Hope, whom no one ever suspected of an ounce of sentiment, mean by assuring him, Tommy Jones, "that he knew he liked lily of the valley, and that of course it ought to be a white bouquet."

What did he mean by declaring that "he *must* have found it, and that Annie promised to give it to him with her own hands ;" and what was all this nonsense about a "blue Natal stamp and a forgery ?"

For days, the flame of the fearful jungle fever, seemed to lick up Hope's life ; his skin was scorching, his temperature and pulse at the highest ratio compatible with existence. The only remedy, and that a desperate one, was to put him in a dhooly, and carry him away to the Shan hills, braving all the dangers of the intervening and pestilential terai, the belt of swamp and forest, that lay at the foot of the mountains. He was fortunate enough to survive the ordeal, and was borne up the steep paths, that led to the breezy hill regions and into the cool pure atmosphere, meeting over and over again caravans of Pathan traders, with their sturdy bullocks and pack ponies, these latter gorgeously bedecked with beads and spangled looking-glass. Armed escorts accompanied these motley trains, and at their head proudly rode the chief, in his Dolly Varden hat, loose blue trousers, fur-lined cloak and silver-mounted dah. Higher and higher yet till the winds from the Chinese border rustled through the hangings of the dhooly and

thrilled the sick man's veins. What a contrast after the stifling, sickening heat of the plains, now becoming blurred and indistinct through the thickening forest. Soothed by the murmur of the mountain streams and rushing cataracts, lulled by the music of birds, the invalid passed gradually into the high lands, beyond which lay the Northern Shan states. The party pushed on through groves of oak and flowering shrubs, and beneath luxuriant groups of orchids, which swung heavily in the scented breeze, dreamily listening to the tinkling of caravan bells, as they passed down into the valley far below. Thus through little known, but exquisite regions, Roger Hope ere long found himself, reposing under the pines of a hill sanatorium.

(To be continued.)

Philippa of Hainault.

By **QUINTON GORDON.**

THIS famous and distinguished woman, wife of Edward III. and daughter of the Earl of Hainault and Holland, was celebrated not only for her heroic courage and irreproachable character, but also for her benevolence and extreme gentleness to all whom she could in any way benefit by her kindness.

William, Count of Hainault, Holland, and Zealand, and Lord of Friesland, had five daughters; Sybella, Margaret, Philippa, Joanna and Isabel. The eldest one, Sybella, had been contracted to Edward III. in infancy, but died young. Of the remaining four, Philippa was the most noted, not only for her sweetness of disposition, but for her exceptional beauty. She was tall, with a supple willowy figure, small hands and feet, and possessed a most winning manner. Her features could not be called regular, but she had that brilliant complexion for which the women of Holland are so justly famous, and the most lovely eyes; large, dark and pathetic, the windows through which looked out a soul in touch and sympathy with all mankind. Essentially gentle, she had, nevertheless, great decision of character and a strong personality of her own, and was, in times of peril or emergency, imperious and commanding and utterly fearless.

Her young husband was also remarkably handsome, and highly gifted with both mental and physical powers. We are told "Edward III. was just six feet in stature, exactly shaped and strongly made; his limbs beautifully turned, his face and nose somewhat long and high, but exceedingly comely; his eyes sparkling like fire, his looks manly, and his air and movements most majestic. He was well versed in law, history and the divinity of the times; he understood and spoke readily Latin, French, Spanish and German."

It was during Edward's residence with his mother at Hainault that he saw Philippa for the first time and fell in love with her,

an affection which was quite as warmly returned by Philippa herself. He was then in his fifteenth year, Philippa a few months younger, and being a minor was under the guardianship of the Earl of Lancaster, but the government for some time was really in the hands of Isabella, his mother, and her favourite Mortimer. Edward was, however, obliged to keep his love affairs to himself, for it was not in accordance with the royal etiquette of that era even to hint that he had disposed of his heart without the consent of the parliament and council.

It was Queen Isabella who eventually suggested to the authorities that a daughter of the house of Hainault would be a fitting bride for her son ; but even as late as August 5th, 1327, the daughter was not particularized in the document requesting the dispensation of the Pope. The words were, "To marry a daughter of that nobleman, William, Count of Hainault, Holland and Zealand," &c., but the name of Philippa was not once mentioned in the letter. So the lovers were kept in suspense until about seven months after Edward's coronation. Then it was that Adam Orleton, the notorious Bishop of Hereford, visited the court of Hainault, and chose the Princess Philippa for her beauty ; for personal beauty was considered by our ancestors as an almost indispensable qualification in a queen consort.

Hardyng, our last rhyming chronicler, whose authority is great, relates the proceedings of the bishop in the following quaint manner :

"He sent forth then to Hainault, for a wife,
A bishop and other lords temporal.
Among them-*selfs* our lords for high prudence,
Of the bishop asked counsel and sentence,
'Which daughter of the five* shall be our queen?'
Who counsell'd thus with sad avisement,
'We will have her with fairest form I ween.'
To which they all accorded with one mind,
And chose Philippe that was full feminine,
As the wise bishop did determine.
But then among them-*selfs* they laughed aye ;
Those lords then said, 'Their bishop judged full sooth
The beauty of a lady.'"

* Sybella was, however, dead at this time.

It is supposed, however, that Edward had previously confided to the bishop his preference for Philippa.

Philippa, escorted by her uncle John of Hainault, arrived in London, December 23rd, 1327, with a numerous suite and great display of magnificence. She was introduced into the City by a procession of clergy, and presented with a service of plate, of the value of £300, as a wedding present, by the Lord Mayor and Aldermen of London.

For about three weeks after her landing there were sumptuous feastings and grand entertainments all over London, and the greatest rejoicings, but Philippa was far too anxious to meet Edward again to wait to see any of it, and went straight on to Nottingham, where Edward was staying at that time.

The royal marriage was celebrated with great magnificence at York Minster, January 24th, 1327-8. The parliament and royal council and nearly all the English nobles were gathered round the young bride and bridegroom, but the most imposing part of the ceremony was the entrance of a hundred Scottish noblemen, dressed in the plaids and kilts of their different clans, with their huge sporrans swaying from side to side, as they made their dignified way up the aisle. They had come to make peace with England; Edward's little sister Joanna, aged five years, having just been married to David Bruce, the heir of Scotland, who was about seven.

Nearly all the Hainaulters returned to their native country after the wedding, but among the few who remained was a young lad named Walter Mauny, or Wautelet de Mauny, who acted as page to Philippa, or as others say, "Whose office was to carve for her."

The young queen was not coronated for about two years after her marriage. It was a very quiet affair, as the necessary funds for supporting the crown had been appropriated by Edward's shameless mother and Mortimer. After the coronation, the king and queen went to the palace of Woodstock, where, on June 15th, 1330, Philippa gave birth to her first-born. It was a son, to the great joy of the nation, afterwards the notorious Black Prince, who inherited all his mother's virtues and beauty, with the splendid talents and wisdom of his father. Philippa, a true mother in the strictest sense of the word, nursed him herself, and the loveliness

of the pair formed the favourite models for the Virgin and Child at that period.

Of Philippa's many children—and she had twelve, eight sons and four daughters—only three were particularly noteworthy ; Edward, the Black Prince, Lionel, Duke of York, and John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster.

The admirable and noble qualities of the Black Prince endeared him to the whole nation. He was generous, kind-hearted, high-minded and honourable, and knew not the meaning of fear. His mother simply idolized him, for proud as she was of her handsome husband, she was even more proud of her daring young son, who was ever chivalrous and tender to his mother, and always on the alert to render her some service. He inherited the warlike instincts of his father, and fought his first battle on the field of Crecy when only sixteen, winning a most glorious victory by his daring exploits and exceptional courage.

It was at this battle that he found the crest of the king of Bohemia, who had just been killed, and adopted it for his own. This crest consisted of three ostrich feathers and the German motto, *Ich Dien*, "I serve," and has ever since formed the crest of every succeeding Prince of Wales, in memorial of that great victory. There is a pathetic little story of the king of Bohemia. He was blind from age, but wishing to set an example to his followers, he ordered his bridle reins to be tied to the horses of two of his attendants, and so riding between them in this manner, he went into the thick of the battle. The dead body of the poor old blind king was afterwards found lying by his attendants, who were also dead, with the three horses, still tied together, standing over them. Cannon were used for the first time in this battle, having been invented some few years previously. The Black Prince also distinguished himself at the battle of Poitiers, where he took the French king, John, prisoner. This king was surnamed "The Good," for his good faith to the English. After his liberation, he heard that his two sons, who were hostages for him, had violated their word of honour by making their escape from Calais, where they had been treated with great respect and allowed to roam about at large. He at once returned to England, and delivered himself up to captivity again, saying, "If honour were lost elsewhere upon

earth, it ought to be found in the conduct of kings." He was treated with the greatest respect and courtesy by Edward III. and the Black Prince. He was to be released on the payment of 3,000,000 gold crowns (£1,500,000), but the money was never paid. Edward III. gave him the Palace of Savoy, in the Strand, for a residence, where he died the same year, 1364. It would take too long to go into the particulars of the other deeds of valour of this brave young Prince of Wales. He, unfortunately, never lived to be king of England, for when assisting the Spanish king to recover his throne, he contracted a disease from which, after lingering a long time in constant pain and suffering, he died June 8th, 1376, in the forty-sixth year of his age. It was generally believed that he had been poisoned, but the true facts never transpired. He was buried in Canterbury Cathedral, and his black armour, from which his name was derived, is still to be seen hanging above his tomb.

Lionel, Duke of York, resembled his father and elder brother, more than any of the others, in his noble qualities. He was a handsome young giant, nearly seven feet high, and a very Hercules in muscular and physical strength, but most good-tempered and amiable.

John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, was born at Ghent (whence his name) at the very time when Edward III. was fighting his great naval battle off Blankenburg.

There is a curious story about his birth. It is said that Philippa gave birth to a little daughter, but through some carelessness of her women she overlaid it, and woke up to find the child dead. Nearly heart-broken at her loss, and in terrible anguish of spirit at the thought of her husband's anger, Philippa insisted on a substitute being found, and bound over her women to secrecy. The attendants, terribly afraid that her agitation would prove fatal, found a porter's wife who had a child the same age, the only drawback being that it was a boy. Philippa, nevertheless, adopted the child, and presented it to Edward on his return as his son. It was only when on her dying bed that she confessed what she had done. Several historians, however, deny this story *in toto*, as they maintain that the upper part of the face of John of Gaunt was exactly like that of Edward III., the true Lancastrian type of features. From the offspring of Lionel, Duke of York, and John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, rose the

wars of York and Lancaster, which lasted nearly a hundred years.

Edward III. had, when eighteen years of age, taken the law into his own hands, and assumed the government of the nation. He deprived his mother, Isabella, of office, took away the enormous dower to which she had helped herself, and reduced her income to £1,000 a year. He then, being afraid she would cause more trouble to the nation by her intriguing disposition, shut her up in Rising Castle, in Norfolk, for life. This castle was at one time a strong fortress, the walls being three yards in thickness, and was built by William Albini, in 1176. There is a residence now built on the estate, within easy distance of Sandringham, which is used by the Duke and Duchess of Fife as a shooting box, and called Castle Rising. At the same time that Isabella was shut up, Mortimer was arrested, and executed at Tyburn, with his two companions, Sir Simon Burford and Sir John Deverel. These were the three first persons hanged at Tyburn, afterwards so notorious for the execution of criminals. It was then known by the name of The Elms, and a stone near the Marble Arch now marks the spot where the gallows were originally situated. This outburst of spirit on the part of the young king showed the nation that they had not to deal with a feeble man like Edward II., but with an energetic and able prince, who was just as self-reliant as his father had been weak and vacillating.

Edward had made war upon France, because he considered he was the next heir to the French crown, Philippe de Valois, who also laid claim to it, being only a cousin to the late French king, while Edward was his nephew. As a matter of fact, however, Charles of Navarre had a prior right to Edward III., as had also the daughters of Philippe V. and Charles IV.

The great drawback to this war was Edward's extreme poverty, caused by his mother having spent not only all his money, but Philippa's portion as well. The crown jewels were nearly always in pawn, and we are told that in the year 1339 Edward pawned his queen's crown at Cologne for £2,500.

Philippa had the most marvellous influence over her husband. She had that wonderful knack—which is essentially the gift of women—of ruling without appearing to do so, and Edward never realized that her delicate suggestions were in reality her commands

Edward was very hot-tempered and passionate, and rather given to act on the impulse of the moment. Had it not been for the influence of a wise and sensible wife, so eminently practical that she was always able to bring the adequate reasons forcibly home to him, Edward's life would not by any means have been such a clean record. Time after time had Philippa, by her gentle authority and marvellous reasoning powers, saved his memory from infamy, and instead of submitting a life to posterity darkened by injustice and stained with innocent blood, he was able to leave behind him generous and noble deeds which now shine forth in letters of gold.

We hear much of Philippa's virtues—her goodness, her piety, her constant thoughtfulness for others, and her never failing love for the poor and destitute caused her to be greatly beloved by the whole nation. She also introduced several useful arts. It was by her advice that the English first manufactured cloth, which afterwards proved such a valuable source of labour and profit. She encouraged the building of churches, the translating of the Bible into English, and was the foundress of Queen's College, at Oxford.*

Philippa was alway left regent during her husband's absence, and at one time had to repel a Scottish invasion. At the famous battle of Nevil's Cross, fought against the Scotch in 1346, Philippa took David, the Scotch king, prisoner. Mounted on a white horse, she rode in among her soldiers, and entreated them to do their duty and utmost for the honour of their king and country, and ended up by imploring them "for the love of God to fight manfully." Then taking leave of them, she commended them "to the protection of God and S. George," and withdrew, to spend her time in prayer, while the battle raged. The situation of Queen Philippa at this time was exactly similar to that of Queen Katharine nearly two centuries later, when left regent by Henry VIII. Like Katharine, Philippa had to repel a Scottish invasion, and it is no little honour to women's government that the two greatest victories won against the Scots were gained during the regency of queens.

On the return of Edward from one of his expeditions, Philippa went to meet and welcome him. They met at Durham, where Edward had taken up his lodging at S. Cuthbert's Priory, near Durham Castle. The king and queen had supper at the priory,

* This latter statement is sometimes disputed.

and Philippa afterwards retired to pass the night in her husband's apartment. Scarcely, however, was she in bed, when the affrighted monks came to the door in terrible distress of mind, and pathetically implored her not to infringe their rules. The good S. Cuthbert, they told her, had, during his lifetime, most sedulously eschewed the company of women, and would be grievously offended if one slept beneath his roof, no matter how high her rank might be. Philippa, imbued with all the reverential awe and superstition of that time, immediately got hastily out of bed, and ran in her nightdress to the castle close by, where she passed the night by herself.

One grand action for which Queen Philippa is so justly celebrated, was her intercession for the lives of the brave burgesses of Calais. It was soon after the famous battle of Crécy that Edward III. marched to Calais with the intention of laying siege to it, but he found on his arrival that it was too strong to be taken by storm, so he determined to subdue it by famine. Kind and generous hearted as Edward was, there were occasions when he could be pitilessly cruel. Nothing was allowed to stand in the way of his ambitions and triumphs. From his very boyhood his whole mind was filled with one ruinous desire—the desire of making conquests. War, to him, represented the one thing to live for, and it may be truly said that his whole life was one long continual war.

He was, notwithstanding, a splendid organizer, and the way in which the siege was conducted was worthy of a better cause. He stationed his fleet directly opposite the harbour, and then built a little town of wooden huts all round Calais. This arrangement answered several purposes ; it made his army comfortable, and not only prevented the inhabitants from coming out, but also prevented any food being sent into the place. Having made all his plans, Edward settled himself to abide his time. Lord John de Vienne, the governor of Calais, determined to hold out to the very last, hoping to tire out Edward's patience, thus proving how little he knew the man he had to deal with. Opposition only made Edward more obstinate, and so at last, in order to make the provisions last out longer, Lord de Vienne turned out one thousand seven hundred old people, delicate women and children. At the sight of these poor, forlorn, half-famished creatures, some of them blind, others crippled, and all of them—the women es-

pecially—suffering cruelly, Edward's heart melted, and instead of destroying them, which the poor wretches fully expected, he gave them food and money and sent them away safely. Finally, after nearly twelve weary months, the inhabitants of Calais, worn out by famine and privation, were obliged to surrender. Edward, however, instead of admiring their brave endurance, was enraged at what he called their obstinate defence, and at first declared he would put the whole garrison to death. He afterwards compromised matters by saying that if six of the wealthiest citizens came to him barefooted, with ropes round their necks, bringing the keys of the town, he would spare the lives of the rest. The grief and despair were terrible at first, but after a while the most wealthy citizen of the town, Eustace de St. Pierre, volunteered to be one of the six. Then another citizen, also rich and respected, came forward—John Daire. After him came James and Peter Wissant, two brothers, followed by two others, thus completing the number.

Lord de Vienne then conducted them to the gates of the city, and delivered them over to Sir Walter Mauny, who in turn delivered them to the king. Edward glared at them with angry looks and beetling brows, for he owed the Calains a grudge for the heavy losses he had suffered from them at sea.

Sir Walter Mauny made a touching little speech, in which he asked for pardon for the six brave burgesses, who had left heart-broken wives and tender young children, to save the lives of their fellow-citizens. Edward vouchsafed no answer, and calmly ignoring the speech gave the sign to the executioner.

At this moment Philippa appeared, her hair falling in disorder over her shoulders, her small hands clasped nervously together, and her gentle face full of tender pity. Falling on her knees before the king she implored him, with tears in her eyes, to have mercy upon the six burgesses and forgive them.

"Ah! gentle sire," she said, in her sweet pleading voice, "since I have crossed the sea to see you, I have never asked you one favour; now I most humbly ask as a gift, for the sake of the son of the blessed Mary, and for your love to me, that you will be merciful to these six citizens and forgive them."

"And for your love to me." Edward looked at her as she knelt before him, her wonderful eyes—always with a peculiarly pathetic look in them—turned to him full of entreaty, her mouth quivering with infinite sorrow and compassion for the unhappy

citizens, and his anger vanished, for he loved her very dearly. Only once, in all their long married life, had he swerved from his allegiance to Philippa, and then he had been mercifully saved by the object of his affection proving herself to be a true and good woman.

Whether Philippa herself ever knew of this is not known, but if she did, she—wise and sensible woman as she was—kept it to herself.

“Dame,” Edward answered, raising her gently from her knees, “I can deny you nothing. Take them, and do with them as you will.”

Philippa, overjoyed, took the citizens to her own tent, had them clothed, gave them a good dinner, and after making them rich presents, had them escorted out of the camp in safety. Edward then took possession of Calais, turned out the inhabitants and repeopled it with English. Thus ended the siege. Calais remained in the hands of the English about 200 years, when it was retaken by the French in the reign of Queen Mary.

Philippa had many sorrows during her forty-two years of married life, not the least of them being the loss of her three little boys in infancy, and the death of her second daughter, Joanna of Woodstock, whose beauty and grace was the theme of every minstrel of the day. This unfortunate princess was seized, on the very eve of her marriage, with the terrible plague called “The Black Death,” which was devastating the country at that time, and which terminated her existence in a few hours. Philippa was, however, mercifully spared the anguish of seeing her first-born die, for her gentle spirit quitted this earth seven years before the melancholy death of the Black Prince.

The queen had been suffering from dropsy for about two years when the malady proved fatal. She was then at Windsor Castle, which had only recently been converted by Edward III. from a fortress into a palace. She died there August 14th, 1369, and her death, as described by Froissart, is most touching.

Taking the king’s right hand in her own, she told him her last wishes, and above all begged that, “When it shall please God to call you hence, you will not choose any other sepulchre but mine, and that you will lie beside me in the cloister at Westminster.”

Nevertheless, strange to say, Philippa is not lying by her husband’s side in the abbey, but at his feet.

The king spent immense sums upon her tomb, which is an altar tomb of Flemish design in black marble. The effigy, by

Hawkin de Liège, is alabaster, and is the earliest portrait effigy in the abbey, the features being without doubt a portrait of Philippa. The queen is represented as wearing the head-dress of the period, and holding the string of her cloak with one hand. The columns at the sides once held little figures, supposed to represent Philippa's twelve children, and the holes were filled up with glass mosaic. A wooden canopy covers the tomb, and an iron railing which had previously covered the tomb of Michael, Bishop of London, at S. Paul's Cathedral, also covered it formerly. There were also, at one time, round the sides of this tomb "thirty sweetly carved niches, wherein have been placed as many little images." These images represented the thirty illustrious personages with whom Philippa was connected. In some mysterious way these disappeared, but in 1857, Sir Gilbert Scott found some of the alabaster tabernacle work in a museum, and had it replaced on the south side of the monument. He also found two of the figures and niches which had been built into the chantry chapel, but they were hardly replaced when the head of one and a valuable small gilt angel were stolen, and so the remaining fragments were secured by a grille. Altogether there were originally seventy figures included in this magnificent tomb, "divers images in the likeness of angels." They were made by John Orchard, a stonemason of London, who also put up the grille. On a tablet close by the tomb is Philippa's Latin epitaph, which Skelton translates as follows :

"Faire Philippe, William Hainault's child, and younger daughter deare,
 Of roseate hue and beauty bright, in tomb lies buried here ;
 King Edward, through his mother's will, and nobles' good consent,
 Took her to wife, and joyfully with her his time he spent.
 Her uncle John, a martial man, and eke a valiant knight,
 Did link this woman to this king in bonds of marriage bright.
 This match and marriage thus in blood did bind the Flemings sure
 To Englishmen, by which they did the Frenchmen's wreck procure,
 This Philippe, dowered in gifts full rare and treasures of the mind,
 In beauty bright, religion, faith, to all and each most kind.
 A fruitful mother Philippe was, full many a son she bred,
 And brought forth many a worthy knight, hardy and full of dread ;
 A careful nurse to students all, at Oxford she did found
 Queen's College, and Dame Pallas' school, that did her fame resound.
 The wife of Edward, dear
 Queen Philippe, lieth here.
 LEARN TO LIVE."

Edward III. was never the same man after the death of Philippa ; all the triumphs, the brilliancy, the happiness and the good fortune seemed to have departed with the queen, leaving in their place only strife, folly, sorrow and gloom. When, about seven years afterwards, Edward lost his dearly beloved son, the Black Prince, the poor old king was quite heart-broken, and only survived a short time. He died at Shene Palace, June 1st, 1377, in the sixty-fifth year of his age and the fifty-first of his reign.

This reign was one of the most glorious, as well as one of the longest, in the annals of the English nation.

Name Unknown.

By MRS. WILL C. HAWKSLEY,

Author of "TURNING THE TABLES," "HELD TO HER PROMISE."

"JAMES HAROLD, James Harold! Coom in, this minit. Drat t' lad. And what's he reading at noo?"

With which the mother of the pale-faced twelve-year-old would seize the volume—there was sure to be a volume, howsoever torn and soiled and incomplete it might be—that was in the child's hands, and after boxing first one ear and then the other with the improvised weapon, would send him off to weed the turnips or clean out the pig-stye. For those were days before the machinations of the School Board and the requirements of "standards" had penetrated into the heart of the Yorkshire dales; days, therefore, when a boy who had a brain and loved books was apt to be apostrophized as "a big, do-nothing loon."

Still, James had one consolation sometimes denied to those similarly circumstanced. His widowed parent, being a thrifty woman who not only looked at both sides but also all round the edges of a penny before spending it, a woman who therefore never lost sight of the fact that, baneful as books might be, they were still worth good money, he was not compelled to stand by and behold his treasures destroyed. At the worst they were but relegated to the top shelf of "t' coopboard," whence the aid of two chairs would enable him, at some favourable instant, again to snatch them.

As to where he got the volumes, who shall say? Even Mrs. Wilson often wondered at their number and variety, although she, at any rate, was aware of the contribution levied upon every book-shelf which the village could boast, not excluding those of the Rev. Douglas Wetherill at the Vicarage. Nor was she blind to the fact, which neither commands nor punishment had influence to prevent, that each stray copper earned outside the range of James' accustomed daily labour as a grinder, went into the till of the secondhand bookseller at the nearest town.

True the place was ten miles off. But double that distance may easily be accomplished by a determined boy after six upon a summer's evening. And that James Harold was determined there could be no manner of doubt.

Of course such a childhood could develop only into one sort of manhood. And by the day that James had, for the last time, outgrown those useful garments that formerly had afforded an apparent example of perpetual shrinkage, he had become a clever, well-read, sallow-faced young giant, with a brain full of crude ideas, a heart that throbbed with ambition, a tongue which, by dint of untold perseverance, had rubbed off most of the north-country burr, and a trunk crammed with tumbled sheets of manuscript upon which no eyes but his own and Mr. Wetherill's had ever lingered. As to the latter, he had, about a year ago, gone to a fresh and far-off living, leaving with his *protégé* as his final legacy a letter, to be personally conveyed, upon the first opportunity, to the editor of a London Radical journal, and in which the cleric commended the bearer to the attention of his friend.

Towards the delivery of this missive every hope and plan of young Wilson at present tended.

"You'll do no good so long as you give but half a mind to your work," remarked the recently-installed incumbent, stopping one day in his walk by the pretty stream which afforded power for the grindstones of his parishioners. For the dale was not without its industries. And the whirr of the machinery might sometimes be heard at almost as great a distance as the chimney of its factory, half hidden by trees, could be distinguished.

In one of the damp little huts where the grinders carried on their sometimes perilous employment, Mr. Chute had come upon James, his foot still upon the treadle, but his eyes and hands engaged with an odd copy of Lord Lytton's "What Will He Do With It?" Imported as the good man had been direct from the soothing quietude of the south country, what should he understand of the workings of such an individuality as that before him? This was not the first blunder that he had made in his treatment of Wilson. And when James looked up straight into the stern grey eyes bent upon him, there was an obstinate compression about the sensitive mouth which, together with the two furrows that made straight lines between his brows, told of already existing irritation and resentment.

"I don't want to do any good with it. What sort of employment do you call this," throwing out his long arms expressively, "for a fellow with education? Why, Jack Harbottle can manage a grindstone."

Clearly contempt could find no lower level than that name.

"Jack Harbottle is a deserving youth," from Mr. Chute. "A clever, industrious workman, popular amongst his mates, learning to sing in the choir, and ——"

"And wishing for nothing better. Just so!"

The elder man's expression grew more severe. Mr. Chute did not approve either of such interruptions to his remarks or of a person who forgot to address him as "sir."

"It would be well for you were you as content and humble-minded. Well for you and for Alice Furniss also."

With which parting shot he drew himself up and went on his way with the martial air that an early military training had given. "T' passon" had been a soldier before he was a cleric, and he was a martinet still.

Left alone, Wilson shut his book and for a few moments returned to his neglected grindstone, the frown upon his face deepening as he puzzled out other problems than those presented by the flying sparks. But at last, with a deep breath which spoke of a resolution taken, he rose and, flinging his coat over one shoulder, passed out into the sunshine. For it was summer, and though he was the last man to quit the shed where his comrades had left him absorbed in his novel, twilight was still an hour or more ahead.

With downcast eyes and dogged air he tramped along the narrow path which skirted the rivulet and its sparkling dams, his thoughts still concentrated upon his recently-formed determination. He would bear this life no longer. He was in altogether a false position here. What did he want with the vicar's condescending notice and admonitions? He himself was a better all-round man than that fossil, and so the world should by-and-by see. Could he and his trunk full of papers but reach London, the fabulous city of his dreams, where, although the streets were not paved with gold—a metal presenting to him at present but slight attraction—the breeze murmured and buzzed of fame, then he would have his chance. And what was there to detain him?

He had a little money, which in his restlessness he had

withdrawn a fortnight since from the savings bank, money hoarded penny by penny, raked together for this very purpose. His Sunday suit was fairly good, and if not fashionable what mattered appearances where genius was concerned? He blamed himself that he had not started ere this, but had allowed the vague dread of finally breaking away from his small world to detain him. Yet not even to his own soul would he admit that the most potent cause for the delay had been his reluctance to give up the importance which, amongst the villagers, attached to him for the learning, sometimes ridiculed, but always regarded with awe, which lent weight to his diction and secured for him a right to be heard. He remembered instead that bidding adieu to the mother, whose partial supporter he had been for years, would not be accomplished without a pang; and that to look for the last time into the eyes of Alice Furniss—but from that imagination he shrank still more strongly.

For it was characteristic of the man that he had no idea of a return. Once let him quit the peaceful valley and there could never be for him a recurrence of its joys. That which he contemplated was a complete severance of the past, with its strivings and strainings, its wild wrestlings of spirit and its trivial local successes, from the future with its fame and fruition, its larger experiences and its ultimate triumph. Of that last he never doubted.

So meditating he trudged slowly through the dust, glancing neither to right nor to left, and visibly starting when a hand, coarse and roughened by labour, for it was the hand of a factory girl, yet very gentle in its touch, was laid upon his grimy shirt-sleeve.

“Eh lad, and hast na so mooch as a luik for me?”

A smile broke for one instant over the gloom of his features. The whole expression softened as he shifted his coat to the shoulder furthest from his companion and held out to her the disengaged hand. The greeting was one more evidence of the difference between himself and his fellows, an evidence almost as marked as his cultivated accent. Any other labourer in the country-side would have been content to acknowledge the presence of his sweetheart by a sideway nod.

“What brings you here, Alice? The mill must have closed early. I was not expecting you.”

She shook her bonny head and allowed the shawl which she wore instead of a hat to fall backwards, thus giving to view a glossy arrangement of hair, with the inevitable "fringe" over the forehead.

"Ef a chap's notions is in t' clouds, he doesna expect mooch here below, o' coorse," she retorted laconically. Then, with a sort of pride that was partly resentment, "Th' talks grander and grander ivery day, James Harold."

The speech pleased him, though of that he made no sign.

"And why don't you try to do the same?" he replied, with the less appearance of gratification because he was taking especial pains to articulate each syllable.

The girl burst into a laugh, loud and noisy as it was hearty.

"Me? What for? Two cliver 'uns moight be ower many in a hoose," looking up from under her long eyelashes, with a vivid blush, to watch how the broad hint might be received. For freely as their names had been bandied about together, she understood to the full as well as did he, that nothing had passed between them of sufficient significance to endanger the liberty of either, although efforts of her own to produce a more settled state of affairs had not been wanting. Usually, however, Wilson had proved deaf to her suggestions. But upon this occasion Alice saw, before he spoke, that something definite might probably follow. Not that his reply, when it came, was encouraging.

"What do you mean?" he demanded coldly, though his own heart was beating with great bounds.

"Mean? Oh, nowt," with a great show of shyness. "On'y Jack Harbottle hev joost bin axing o' me to keep coompany wi' him. And ——"

She came to a standstill then, as well in her movements as her words. Already they were rapidly nearing the high road, and she had no desire to emerge from under the sheltering trees with tears in her eyes and a tell-tale flush upon her cheeks. It was altogether too momentous a crisis in which to endure the chance gaze of some uninterested spectator.

Nor indeed was Wilson less alive to the importance of the occasion, realizing as he did that this, and not the silent self-communing of half-an-hour ago, was the time of combat and of destiny. The charm of her presence was upon him, and he was

aware that he had but to make one sign and thereby take for his own this buxom maiden of the shining locks and cherry lips. She had been his playmate from childhood, and ever since he had grasped the meaning of the word love she had posed as its personation in his life. His pulses were wont to leap at her approach; his truant heart, in spite of all endeavour, delighted in her proximity. For, in his own way, he loved her.

And yet what part could be assigned in his scheme of existence to this wild untutored creature, with the absence of all shame for her ignorance, the lack of every ambition for herself or him? Honour, distinction, fame—or Alice! He could not possess all. And as the choice was thus forced upon him, not indeed for the first time mentally, yet in an altogether unaccustomed form so far as her alluring presence was concerned, he did not hesitate; although there was enough of excitement in the moment to carry him back to the diction of his childhood, a sign of intense emotion with James Wilson.

"Eh lass, th' canst do better nor tak' oop wi' Jack Harbottle," he exclaimed.

"An' why not Jack as weel's anooother?" was the prompt retort. "*He* hev telt me that he luves me, whiles thee——"

He interrupted her quickly.

"I'm going to London," he said, with a calmness contrasting oddly with the heat of the previous instant. But she only laughed at that.

"Thee'st said that any toime these last ten year. But th' bean't goon yet."

"I shall be by this time to-morrow, though."

"Jim!"

A chalky whiteness crept over her bright complexion, and she suddenly drew up her shawl, as though a cold wind had blown over her. But Wilson was not observing this by-play. Instead, his eyes were bent upon his own reflection, given back by the steel-grey, placid water of the dammed-up stream.

"Jim!" the woman repeated. Then, in a tone of anguish, "And th' will forget us, theer amongst thy foine folks"

It was not in his nature to attempt any denial. Yes, he intended, with all the force of a will so strong that it must conquer memory, to forget. So he still stood in silence, whilst upon Alice the bitter truth slowly dawned that this second ruse had failed

as egregiously as the first, and that neither by jealousy nor reproaches could she lure him into one movement of passion that should link his future with her own. Then, at last, the savage in her burst forth.

“An’ oi may walk oot wi’ Jack, for owt th’ cares. Th’ wull goo and niver cast a thowt at arl th’ happy toimes we’ve had. Goo, then, goo ! Oi’d liefer not luik oopon thy face agen, ef oi can help it.”

With which she gathered the fluttering ends of her wrap still closer about her, and since she was by this time beyond the stage of recollecting public opinion, ran off down the high road towards home. As to James, he took two great strides in the same direction and then pulled up desperately, drawing a half-sobbing sigh and clenching his fists.

“She is not for me,” he muttered, half instinctively entrenching himself behind his most careful English. Then he made his way to the cottage where had been passed every night of his life, but across the threshold of which, after to-morrow, he should never step again.

In spite of his previous dread of it, the parting from his mother proved an easy matter after the interview just ended. The old Yorkshire woman’s self-contained nature would have been incapable of any great display of grief, even had she experienced the sentiment. But James, whose thoughts and aims and hopes were not as hers, had never been her favourite child. Bill, with his jolly, good-humoured laugh, coarse ways and fiery temper, she could appreciate, and to him she clung, notwithstanding occasional fierce words and even oaths. So long as she had him the other far more considerate and tender son mattered little, except for his wages.

“Us’ll do bad wi’oot th’ bit o’ mooney,” was therefore her first lament, upon listening to James’ announcement. But when, in his ignorant hopefulness, he promised larger supplies in future, she was more than satisfied to see him depart. Some women are born like that.

And thus, with the inestimable box of papers to guard, and with Mr. Wetherill’s letter, supplemented by a few—very few—shillings, in his pocket as his only resource, Wilson next day took his seat in the slow train for town. He had wrenched himself free from accustomed associations ; the world lay wide before

him ; foreseen success wiled him on ; a long vista of life stretched away in front ; all beckoning him—whither ?

The letter from Mr. Wetherill was duly delivered next morning, and did not fail of its effect.

“ If he *is* a native genius, and Wetherill isn't apt to be mistaken, he may come in useful just now,” decided the editor, on the out-look for new sensations ; for, so far, this dead season had been even more profoundly dull than usual. “ Show him in, Tom.”

The strong, clever face made its own impression. There was grit behind, too, as a few words showed. A north-country man with ideas is sometimes worth exploiting and at any rate this one should have his chance.

“ You've brought some articles to show me ? ” his interlocutor said brusquely, at that point. “ If you'll leave them and call in a few days—— ”

“ Any time,” responded the aspirant, with brief independence. And even the recollection of dwindling coppers was lost in the stinging realization that against English “ as she is spoke ” in Fleet Street, his own painfully acquired accent sounded provincial exceedingly.

“ On Thursday evening at seven, sharp. Good morning.”

Disappointment mingled with satisfaction as James made his way down the staircase and out into the crowded street. Had the great man but devoted five minutes to running his eye over those productions at present in his charge, the dismissal had been less curt. Yet he carried away a promise of their ultimate perusal and since yesterday the stories of Chatterton and Tannahill had been ringing in his ears. The future, as he walked along the pavement hot with August heat, seemed all a golden beautiful mystery.

And then——

A bit of old London was disappearing. Down a turning off Ludgate Hill workmen were busy pulling down, inch by inch, and brick by brick, a hoary dwelling which had served, without decay, the generations as they moved. Now its site was needed for new, modernly-fashioned warehouses, and the fiat of destruction had gone forth. Already the roof had gone, and as to-day the smoke-stained stones of the top coping must be removed, hammer and chisel were busy at their work. The

noise attracted James Wilson's attention. In his idle, happy hopefulness he turned aside to look.

It was but one stone that slipped from its position, and, rebounding from the wall, dropped heavily. But in its fall was avenged the fate of the despised building, once a shelter and a home, now thrust aside and condemned. With a crash it reached—not the pavement. But upon the spot where, an instant earlier, there stood a man with the vigour of life pulsing through his veins and the conviction of power thrilling his being, there lay an inert, crushed mass of flesh and bones ; just a heap of clay, that quivered once convulsively and then was still.

Next day the City Coroner held an inquest upon the body of a man, name unknown, and a verdict of accidental death having been recorded, the corpse was relegated to a pauper grave. And on Thursday an editor in his sanctum gave a wondering thought to the rustic whose papers had so thoroughly justified Wetherill's encomiums that he had intended to see what there was in the fellow. Who, however, had not turned up. Of course the effusions already in his possession, though full of promise, were utterly impracticable. And after being allowed to encumber a pigeon-hole for a day or two—for Wetherill's old chum was the essence of good-nature—the MSS. were thrust into the paper basket and carried off to light the care-taker's fire. So the stream flowed on.

Into Temptation.

By A. PERRIN.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

WIDOWED.

"Take note, take note, O world,
To be direct and honest is not safe!"—*Shakespeare.*

I DROVE straight to our own house on entering the station, and sent for Dr. Herring at once, after which I took up my position by the bed, on which Andrew had been laid, to wait for his arrival.

Of course, when he came, Mrs. Herring was with him, bursting with curiosity and a string of questions on her lips, which were somewhat checked by the sight of the face on the pillow.

In spite of frequent interruptions on the part of his wife, I managed to tell Dr. Herring clearly what had happened, and after a brief examination of my husband, he told me in his fussy nervous manner as kindly as he could, that it was a bad case of heat apoplexy, and that there was little or no hope. And three hours later, in spite of all our efforts to restore him to consciousness, the end came—and I was a widow.

Andrew died very quietly, without a struggle, and scarcely a sigh, only the heavy breathing grew gradually fainter, and at last ceased altogether, and it was not until Dr. Herring told me I must go out of the room that I realized what had happened.

"Come with me, my dear," said Mrs. Herring, putting her arm through mine; "you can do no good now."

She meant kindly, I knew, but I felt I must be alone to think over the change that had so suddenly come across my life, and shaking myself free, I pushed past her and went into the garden.

The warm evening air was heavy with the scent of mango

blossom, and the burning, dusty wind had ceased altogether. I wandered on trying to collect my thoughts, until I was stopped by a large tree, with which I had almost come into collision, and looking up I found I was standing in the very place where Gerald and I had met those cold December evenings, really only a short time ago, though now it seemed like years.

Then a thought flashed through my brain like lightning.

I was free !

I was free to go where I would, to do as I liked,—to find Gerald !

Ah ! how heartless I was to be rejoicing over my ten minutes old freedom when the man who had been my husband was lying only just dead, scarcely even cold.

I honestly tried to feel sorry; I tried to cry, to call up feelings of regret and remorse that I had not done my duty better by him. But it was no good, tears would not come, and in the place of feelings of regret there was only a wild, maddening joy.

Now there was no one in the world I need be afraid of, no one who could call me to account or question my actions. I was unhampered and independent. The future was in my own hands, and I could think of nothing else.

Presently I saw Dr. Herring's fat, fussy little figure advancing towards me.

"My dear Mrs. Boscawen," he said timidly, being evidently one of those people who are absolutely *afraid* of a fellow-creature in grief, "you must try to control yourself, and face your great trouble. I hope you will come back with Mrs. Herring to-night; of course, you can't stay here alone, and I must go and see Pierce about the arrangements."

"What arrangements?" I asked absently.

"For the funeral," replied Dr. Herring, looking rather surprised at my question. "In this country people have to be buried a few hours after death, especially this weather——"

"Yes, yes," I said hurriedly; "I will come. Thank you very much."

Before I left the house with Mrs. Herring, I went alone into the room where Andrew lay, as I knew it would be the last time I should see him.

I stood by the bed and looked down on the still, rigid figure; but I could not believe that I was taking a final farewell of all

that remained of my husband, who only yesterday had looked so well and strong.

That swollen, disfigured face, with its awful fixed expression, surely could not be his? And I glanced behind me, half expecting to see the real Andrew coming into the room, almost fancying I could hear him calling me in the high, irritable tone that was still ringing in my ears.

I did not know what to do. I felt I ought to kiss him for the last time, but I shrank from touching the mis-shapen, purple features, so I gently took up the cold hand that felt so leaden and unnatural, and pressed my lips to it. Then the tears did come as I thought of the narrow unloved life which had ended so suddenly and unexpectedly, and I wondered if he really had cared for me in his own crotchety way, and if he would have been sorry to leave me, had he known he was going to die.

As I left the room I found old Nazuf Ali, the chuprassie, lying in front of the door, with the tears streaming down his face.

"The sahib is dead," he wailed. "Now what will poor Nazuf Ali do! He was my father and my mother, and many years had I been with him. He allowed me to keep my cattle in the compound, and my family in the servants' houses. Now I shall be turned out and misfortunes will come upon my head."

I passed him abstractedly, as I went into the dining-room to look for Mrs. Herring, but the old man followed me, still weeping copiously, and informed me that he had a favour to ask of me.

"What is it?" I inquired.

"Mem sahib, will you put in a word for me to the new collector sahib when he comes? He may be a sahib who would turn me out on account of my age and take away my post of head chuprassie. If the mem sahib would but write a note saying Nazuf Ali was a good, honest man, it would be worth a fortune to her poor slave."

"Oh! you old wretch!" I cried in English, for my Hindustani was still very limited. I was disgusted with Nazuf Ali, who had evidently simulated his grief to touch my heart, and get what he wanted. Even he, the oldest servant Andrew had, at once thought only of himself, and how he could ingratiate himself with whoever took his master's place, though, after all, he was no worse than myself, and, with a feeling of self-accusation, I sat down and humbly wrote the desired character, which Nazuf Ali triumph-

antly pocketed, his tears disappearing the instant it was safely in his possession.

I was glad to get to the Herrings' cool thatched house, with the heavy punkahs swinging noiselessly to and fro and the absence of dust and flies, and I entered it with a feeling of relief.

Chatty was very much overawed when she heard what had happened, and spoke in a whisper for the first half-hour I was in the house, after which she discovered that I was not particularly changed in appearance or manners, so resumed her usual ear-piercing accents.

I lay awake nearly all night thinking of the funeral, which I knew was to take place about five o'clock in the morning, and shuddering with a nameless fear, born of the strain I had gone through during the day, as the jackals hunted wailing and shrieking across the plain at the back of the house.

And then, as I dozed, I began to build castles in the air of the time when I should meet Gerald again. How glad and thankful I was that I had meant to say no to him when he asked me that question at the ball! How nearly I had said yes, and what misery I might have brought on us both. And now there would be no shame or reproach, the future lay bright and shining before us, and there would be nothing to mar its brilliance. I would not write to Gerald, I would *go* to him, for I could not miss seeing his face when he knew that now there was nothing between us. I thought of his earnest voice when he had sworn he loved me; I remembered the promise I had given him that I would send for him if ever I needed him. I would do better than send, I would go to him myself. Poor fellow, how miserable he must have been all this time. I knew from my own feelings how wearily he must have been hungering and longing for a sight of me.

Mrs. Herring entered my room the next morning, arrayed in a marvellous dressing-gown, composed of various parts of old dresses, the result being trying to one's gravity in the extreme. She seated herself on the edge of my bed, and inquired how I was.

"I feel better now, thanks," I said; "I was very tired and upset last night."

"What would you like sent in for your breakfast? I daresay you would rather have nothing but slops to-day."

Why? There's nothing the matter with me, and I'm going to get up."

"Oh, my dear Mrs. Boscawen! Remember you are a newly-made widow! What *are* you thinking of?"

"But surely I needn't stay in bed on that account?" I inquired, aghast at the idea.

"Considering your husband was only buried a few hours ago, it would be only *proper* for you not to get up. If you do feel well you ought not to say so; a widow cannot be too careful."

"All the same I think I will get up," I replied firmly, for I had no desire to play the invalid, and I wanted to get all arrangements made as quickly as possible for leaving the country I was once so anxious to see.

"I wonder how you are left," pondered Mrs. Herring. "Of course you'll have your £350 a year in any case, and I fancy there must be a good deal of money besides. I suppose you would like my husband and Mr. Pierce to go over to-morrow and look for the will?"

"I suppose so," I said doubtfully, "but I don't know what is usually done."

"You leave it to them," said Mrs. Herring, in a reassuring voice; "they'll do everything. Only I wish it wasn't Mr. Pierce; though, of course, it must be, as he is acting collector now. He'll be coming here so much, and I've been so careful to keep Chatty out of his way. Of course he'll take advantage of this opportunity to try and make love to her, though I've no doubt she would refuse him just as she did Sir Gerald Daintry."

"Have you heard anything of Sir Gerald lately?" I asked with a beating heart.

"Well, no, I can't say I have," replied Mrs. Herring, "for the mail after he left, my sister Eliza wrote to say they were moving up to London, where her husband had bought a practice. *Such* a good thing! You know what a nice position a London doctor has. No doubt they will be giving parties, and living in tip-top style. Oh, I know Eliza! She'd have the best of everything."

"And you didn't hear what Lady Daintry's illness was, or if she recovered?"

"No. You see it must have happened after they left Ditchwater. You remember the news came by telegram the night of that

ball, if there *was* a telegram at all, which I am inclined to doubt."

"Where *is* Ditchwater, Mrs. Herring? I mean in what county?"

"Hampshire," replied Mrs. Herring; "somewhere near Bournemouth, I believe, but I've never been there, as my sister Eliza married after I came out to India, which is many years ago now."

I could scarcely repress an exclamation when I heard that Gerald's home was near Bournemouth. There certainly seemed a fate about these things, as Gerald himself had said. Now I should be able to go to Aunt Addie or the Careys', and be within reach of him without any trouble whatever.

That afternoon Mr. Pierce came over to see me. I received him alone in the drawing-room, Chatty having gone to lie down with a novel, and Mrs. Herring being buried in the store-room as usual.

"I hope you are not feeling ill," he said, rather stiffly, as we shook hands; "you've had a very trying time."

"It was very sudden," I said awkwardly, feeling that I ought to have been looking pale and ill, and ready to cry on the first opportunity. But it was no use to attempt affectation with Mr. Pierce, so I determined to speak and behave exactly as I felt.

"Mr. Pierce," I said, "I am not going to pretend grief that I do not feel to you. That would only make my not feeling it still worse. You must know very well that I was not happy, and that poor Andrew——"

"That you would rather I congratulated than condoled with you?" put in Mr. Pierce hastily.

I winced, though I told myself that whatever he thought of me could not matter two straws, for in another fortnight at the very most I should see the last of him, and if he was disgusted at my indifference it was nothing to me.

"Oh, I've no doubt you would think much more of me if I wept crocodile's tears, and told any number of lies about my feelings," I said hotly.

"You know very well I'm the last man in the world to wish you to do that," he answered; "not you in particular, but any one," he added, a speech which I considered he might just as well have left unsaid.

"Then why are you so disagreeable about it?"

To my astonishment he sighed, and answered quite gently :

"I don't know. I feel very bad-tempered this afternoon, Mrs. Boscawen, and I must ask you to forgive my rudeness. But you won't be offended if I advise you to keep your feelings to yourself? Everybody doesn't know as I do, what you had to put up with, and it might give people a wrong impression ; it's never worth while to do that when you can avoid it by being silent."

"Yes, I know what you mean," I said, "but because I spoke frankly to you, it does not follow that I shall do so to everybody else."

"I'm glad you thought me worthy of your confidence," he said, and though from mere force of habit he could not keep the sneering inflection out of his voice, his face contradicted the voice in which he spoke.

"I came this afternoon," he went on presently, "to ask you what you would like done about your husband's affairs?"

"Did he leave a will, do you know?" I asked.

"Yes, he did, for I was one of the witnesses ; he signed it almost immediately after you arrived in Kuttahpore, and the head babu in the collector's office was the other witness. I think he had it drawn up at home before his marriage and brought it out with him."

"I don't know where he kept it," I said ; "some one ought to look for it."

"Yes. I thought if Dr. Herring and I went over to-morrow afternoon and looked through the papers, we could put everything in train for winding up your affairs."

"Thank you," I said ; "I should like to come too, if you don't mind."

"I think," said Mr. Pierce doubtfully, "if you would come a little later, when Herring and I have seen the will, it would be better, and if you wished, I would go through any other papers with you afterwards."

"Very well," I replied ; "I will do that. Of course I want everything settled as soon as possible, as I want to go home at once."

Mr. Pierce slightly raised his eyebrows. I knew he could read my thoughts as clearly as if I had spoken them, and I grew crimson, but he said nothing, for which I was grateful to him.

So it was agreed that he and Dr. Herring should go up to the now empty house soon after four o'clock the next evening, and that I was to follow them a little later, and then Mr. Pierce took his departure, somewhat to my relief, for I always felt that he could see through me like a pane of glass.

Mrs. Herring did not at all approve of my plan of going up to the house.

"You ought not to go yourself," she said emphatically ; "if the doctor and Mr. Pierce looked through the papers and told you the result, it would be quite sufficient. I must say your conduct is *most* unbecoming. All the widows *I've* ever seen or heard of behaved quite differently. You ought to stay in your room for at least a week."

CHAPTER XXIX.

MR. PIERCE'S ADVICE.

"A man convinced against his will,
Is of the same opinion still."

DECLINING Mrs. Herring's escort the next evening, I got into the wagonette and drove up to the collector's house, where I found Mr. Pierce by himself waiting for me in the verandah.

"The doctor and I have done a good deal," he said, helping me down from the carriage, "and now he's just been sent for to one of the clerk's ; he's only been gone a few minutes."

"All the better," I said, as I walked into the house and entered the deserted study, where I knew Andrew's private despatch-box was kept.

Half-an-hour later, after carefully looking through all the papers, including the will, which Mr. Pierce handed to me in silence, I knew how I stood in the world.

Andrew had left me everything he possessed, with the exception of a legacy to Mrs. Carey. His private investments at home yielded something over a thousand a year, and there was a large sum in cash lying at the Putwa bank, besides a lakh of rupees, or roughly speaking ten thousand pounds, in Bank of Bengal shares, so that, including my pension, I had about seventeen hundred a year. *But* I was to lose it all in the event of my marrying again. Mr. Carey was appointed sole executor, and if

I forfeited my money by a second marriage it was to go to the Carey children. I looked up at Mr. Pierce when I had thoroughly grasped the fact that, according to every-day ideas, I was a rich woman ; in fact, in my own estimation it was a perfect fortune, and I drew a long breath of surprise and delight.

"Well?" said Mr. Pierce.

"How soon can I have some money?" I inquired. My companion's face clouded.

"Don't you think your husband has behaved rather well to you?" he asked. He seemed to be for ever taking me to task.

"That has nothing to do with my question," I replied haughtily, and to my intense vexation Mr. Pierce burst out laughing.

"How you hate correction in any form," he said. "If you want money immediately, no doubt the bank would advance as much as is necessary on the strength of the will ; but your affairs can't be wound up all at once. Mr. Carey must be communicated with first. I think the best plan will be for you to go home and let me settle up what I can out here, and send the cash after you ; of course you can't touch the shares without Mr. Carey's advice."

"Oh, thank you very much," I said gratefully ; "I'm afraid you are having a lot of trouble on my account, but if you could get me enough money to take me home at once I should be so glad."

"And what about your things here, the horses and the furniture, &c?"

"If you would sell everything for me it would be very good of you, or get Mrs. Herring to do it ; she loves that sort of thing."

"Certainly. But, Mrs. Boscawen ——"

"What?"

"Are you determined to rush home in this great hurry? Don't you think you had better wait a little, and give yourself time to think?"

"No. I don't," I replied shortly.

"You know you lose everything, except a hundred and fifty pounds a year from the funds, if you marry again."

I glared furiously at Mr. Pierce.

"What do you mean?" I asked angrily.

"Now, don't lose your temper," he said calmly. "You have

allowed me to help you with your affairs ; you have honoured me with your confidence, both yesterday and on another occasion, which, no doubt, you remember as well as I do, and on the strength of that, I mean to speak out. If you are offended with me I daresay I shall be able to survive it."

I almost hated him as he sat there with his chin in the air, speaking so deliberately and looking so utterly unconcerned, but there was no use in being angry, for he said himself in so many words that he did not in the least care if I was. So I resigned myself to the inevitable and nodded my head ungraciously as a signal that he might continue.

"Am I right in assuming that you mean to see young Daintry's brother directly you get home? Yes, I see I am Well, Mrs. Boscawen, for God's sake *wait* and write to him first. You will save yourself an infinite amount of pain and trouble by doing so."

"I don't see how," I said faintly ; "tell me what you mean."

"I honestly believe that Gerald Daintry is not all that you imagine him to be, and I advise you to write to him from here and wait for his answer."

"I *can't* stay here six weeks longer than I need," I said desperately. "I shall go mad. Mr. Pierce, I *must* go home and see him. It's no good trying to write, I couldn't say all I want to in a letter, and it might be lost or a hundred things happen to prevent his getting it. No, I can't write. I must see him and tell him myself. I don't believe you know anything about him ; you're only trying to frighten me and make me unhappy."

"My dear Mrs. Boscawen, you are simply childish. I assure you I have no motive whatever in warning you except that I consider it my duty to do so. You must see, if you think for one moment, that it cannot personally affect me what happens to you. I am only trying to spare you trouble, or, rather, to lighten it when it comes."

"Very well," I said coldly, though my blood was boiling, "if it does not affect you in any way, I will stick to my original plan and go home at once. You have done your duty, and tried to make me as uncomfortable as possible, so it can make no difference whatever to you, and I would rather please myself."

"Oh, certainly," said Mr. Pierce quietly. "Do you object to my smoking? There are still some papers to be sorted."

I sat in angry silence while he lit his cigar and went on turning over the papers. What right had he to dictate to me, and try to poison my mind against Gerald? Of course he was jealous of Gerald's good looks and cleverness, and revenged himself by dropping mysterious hints that had no foundation whatever. *Nothing* would ever make me disbelieve in my idol. Mine must be a poor sort of affection, indeed, if it could be disturbed by anything of that kind. How irritating Mr. Pierce was, and how rude of him to say he did not care what happened to me. At any rate he might have had the politeness to leave that unsaid. I glanced at him as he sat there calmly smoking, his dark eyes following the lines on the paper, and I could not but own unwillingly to myself that I had done him an injustice when I had pronounced him jealous of Gerald. Fancy Mr. Pierce jealous of anybody; he was much too faultlessly perfect in character ever to be guilty of anything so human as jealousy. I wished he would speak and carry on the battle. I was longing to justify myself, and prove how right I was in following my own line and going home at once, and how vague and devoid of sense his advice had been.

But he apparently meant to take no further notice of me; no doubt he was vexed because he had found some one who did not consider his opinions infallible; it was a good thing he had discovered that it was no use laying down the law to *me*.

I coughed.

Mr. Pierce took no notice.

I got up and began to walk about.

"Do you mind moving? you're in my light," he said.

I moved away from the window, and finally took refuge in the drawing-room, where I sat down feeling rather like a naughty child. It was very absurd that anything Mr. Pierce could say should have the power to annoy me so much. I was cross with myself for feeling so put out with him, and my determination to go home at once was strengthened more than ever. But presently a conviction stole over me that I had been very ungrateful. He was giving himself a great deal of trouble on my behalf, though, of course, it was all done from a sense of *duty*, but at any rate the fact remained, and the least I could do

in return was to behave civilly to him. He had meant his advice well, and, of course, he could not help his unfortunate method of expressing himself.

I made up my mind to go and apologize to him ; it was certainly much better for us to be friends during the short time that remained before I could shake the dust of Kuttahpore off my feet for ever.

I returned to the study, where I found him standing up locking the despatch-box, and evidently preparing to depart.

"Are you tired of waiting?" he said, just as if nothing had happened to disturb the peace between us ; "I shan't be long now. What's the time?"

This was not at all what I had expected, and made my apology almost impossible ; however, I was not going back now my mind was made up, so I cleared my throat and began :

"Mr. Pierce."

"Yes?"

"I'm afraid I was very rude just now. I lost my temper because I thought you had no right to interfere with my actions, and it was very ungrateful of me. I know you are doing a lot for me, even though it is only from a sense of duty." I paused for a moment to allow this little barb to take effect, and looking up I found Mr. Pierce regarding me with an amused expression, and his eyes simply dancing with laughter.

This was too irritating ; I became enraged once more.

"Oh ! How *aggravating* you are !" I cried, forgetting myself. "It's no good trying to be friends with you. I came to humble myself by begging your pardon, simply because I knew I was indebted to you, and all you do is to laugh at me. I shall go back to the Herrings'. You need not trouble yourself to come with me for I don't want you."

All trace of amusement left Mr. Pierce's face ; he took a step forward to prevent my leaving the room.

"Mrs. Boscawen," he said, "you quite misunderstand me. I am much more anxious to be friends than you are if you would only believe me. Don't go away angry. Let me clear myself. I daresay it was interfering of me to offer you my advice, and I am a blundering idiot and don't know how to talk to women ; but I did it for the best. We don't agree, so we'll keep our own opinions and say no more about it. I am more than willing to do

anything I can for you, and I do it from friendship. Lastly, I laughed when you came in just now because you began your speech so dramatically. It was making such a mountain out of a molehill, and I really couldn't help myself. Now are you satisfied? Or must I go down on my knees?" I laughed in spite of myself; it was very nice to be on good terms with him again, and I shook hands with him feeling I had made myself somewhat ridiculous.

"Now," he said, sitting down on the edge of the study table, "I'm not going to give you advice again, but I should like to know your plans. Do you mind talking them over with me?"

"Not at all," I said, grateful that he bore me no malice after my rude speeches. "Wouldn't it be nicer out in the garden?"

So we strolled out into the scented air and paced slowly up and down the drive.

"I shall go straight to Bournemouth," I began; "you know my aunt, Miss Cameron, lives there and Andrew's cousin, Mrs. Carey, so I shall be with people I know. I shouldn't go to them only—that—that Sir Gerald's place is somewhere near Bournemouth."

"Yes, Daintry Manor, in the parish of Ditchwater," said Mr. Pierce; "I've often heard young Douglas Daintry speak of it."

"Don't you see," I said nervously, "he will be able to come and see me there, or I could go to him if it's near Bournemouth."

"For heaven's sake don't go to him!" exclaimed Mr. Pierce. "There! I've begun giving you advice again; but at any rate it would be better for him to come to you."

He looked at me gravely with a touch of tender pity in his hard rugged face, which improved him immensely. I thought I had never seen Mr. Pierce look so handsome; but his pity was wasted on me as I did not need it.

"Very well," I said; "I won't do anything silly. But I want to get home at once. How soon could I get enough money to start with?"

"You can take your passage at once," he said; "if you like I will do that for you, and arrange with the bank about the money. Do you mean to go by P. and O?"

"Yes, and I should like them to reserve me a cabin to myself. I will have the best in the ship if money can get it for me. I really *am* well off, am I not? I can hardly believe that I am rich."

"Yes, you really have plenty of money," said Mr. Pierce reassuringly, "and I'll telegraph about your passage to-morrow. You can start by the mail of the —th if you leave here in three or four days for Bombay; and I will go into Putwa myself and see the manager of the bank about the money you will want. Mr. Carey will supply you with as much as you require when you get home."

"Do you think I ought to telegraph to the Careys and Aunt Addie?"

"Yes. I will see to that too."

"You're really very good, Mr. Pierce."

"Oh, it's all duty," said Mr. Pierce laughing, and then we said good-night and I returned to the Herrings'.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE LAST OF KUTTAHPORE.

"Farewell! A long farewell!"

I SET about making my preparations for leaving at once. I sent to the best dressmaker in Putwa and ordered enough mourning to take me home, but I refused to don a widow's cap, much to Mrs. Herring's horror, who made me one herself, and also insisted on my sending for another; but I looked so awful in both of them that I decided to wait till I got home and could choose a becoming shape for myself.

"What people would say," which was the string which Mrs. Herring harped on perpetually, did not influence me in the least, though I knew I should have to wear something of the sort while I was in Mrs. Carey's vicinity.

Mr. Pierce telegraphed home for me, and also to Bombay for my passage, and secured me a cabin to myself in the best part of the ship. He certainly took a great deal of trouble on my account, and I really looked forward to his visits, and felt quite sorry that I should have to say good-bye to him so soon. He was always good-tempered, though his speeches were sometimes

disagreeable, and I was certain of his understanding my meaning whatever I said, or did not say, to him. He was amusing, too, in his odd, cynical way, and a very interesting companion, as there seemed to be nothing he did not know something about.

I can hardly tell what I should have done without him all that week, for I was in such a fever of impatience to be off that I could scarcely eat or sleep. Chatty's continual senseless rattle tried my temper, although the poor girl did all she could to make me happy and comfortable, while her mother never left me alone on the subject of what was right and proper to do under the circumstances, and what was not. So that the occasional glimpses I got of Mr. Pierce were positively refreshing. A few days before the date on which I was to start I went to see Mrs. Argles, who had twice endeavoured to pay me a visit since Andrew's death, but had each time been outwitted by Mrs. Herring, who prevented her carrying out her intention, so I felt that the least I could do was to fix an afternoon for going to tea with her.

"Oh! how nice you look in black!" were her first words when she saw me.

I explained that I had come to say good-bye as I was going home at once, and that I was sorry I had not seen her when she came to call.

"Oh, I know you couldn't help it," she said; "it was all Mother Herring: she does hate me! Now do have a cup of tea; it's probably the last time I shall ever give it to you. I *am* sorry you're going. Your being here was always some excitement, although one hardly ever saw you, and now this awful place will be worse than ever. Really I sometimes think I shall go mad."

Mrs. Argle's pretty blue eyes filled with tears, and she looked very piteous.

"I do envy you," she went on. "I hear you've been left awfully well off, and you're young and good-looking, and a widow into the bargain. What a time you'll have! I do wish one could be a widow without one's husband dying. They *always* enjoy themselves."

I could not help laughing, at the same time feeling very sorry for her, as existence at Kuttahpore was certainly anything but

lively. "What do you mean to do next year? Go to the hills?"

Mrs. Argles hesitated.

"No," she said; "I don't think I can go away from poor old Bob; I should feel such a brute; and to tell you the truth, in strict confidence, I couldn't trust myself alone in the hills. I know half-a-dozen men would be after me at once, and I should pick out the nicest of the lot and flirt with him till I was black in the face. No, it wouldn't do; I've just sense enough left to know that much. But, oh, I should dearly love a good fling. I'm rapidly becoming a frump here."

"I must say I'm very sorry for you having to stay here," I said. "Your husband ought to apply for a transfer. I'm very thankful to be getting out of it myself, I know."

"You had an awful shock I suppose?" said Mrs. Argles, alluding to Andrew's death; "I haven't liked to say anything to you about it. I never know *what* to say on these occasions."

"Don't talk about it," I said with a shudder, as the scene in the tent rose up before my eyes; "I hate remembering it. Where is your husband now?"

"He's been in camp. Not in tents, of course; it's much too hot; but you know we have inspection houses about every ten miles or so. He's coming in to-morrow, and Mr. Cassell too. That young man has just got a step of promotion, which he says he ought to have had five years ago, instead of being thankful he has got it at all. I believe he'd grumble in Paradise."

"Probably most of us would," I said.

Then I stayed chatting idly with Mrs. Argles until the evening wore on, and I had to take leave of her so as to be back in time for the Herrings' dinner hour.

The next two days seemed interminable, though I had a good deal to do in the way of packing and sorting my belongings.

Much to Chatty's indignation, Mrs. Herring asked me to give her my coloured dresses as a parting gift, which I had meant to leave behind me in any case.

"They'll fit Chatty nicely with a little alteration," she said, folding them up with much satisfaction, "and now I need not

get her any new summer things with what she has already got."

"Indeed, ma, I'm not going to put them on at all!" exclaimed Chatty; "they're very nice as they are, but they'll look awful altered. Mrs. Boscawen's figure's quite different to mine. If you try to make me wear them I'll cut them into little bits with a pair of scissors. I'm not going to be done out of my new things."

Chatty's threats were never idle ones, as her mother knew to her cost, so with a resigned sigh Mrs. Herring left the room, saying she must see what could be done to alter them for herself since Chatty did not like the idea of them.

"Ma's mad about clothes," said Chatty, closing the door on her disappointed parent. "Just fancy! she ordered the native tailor to make me a jacket the other day, and wanted to sew the band of my old one into it because it had the name of a shop on it, and then she said no one would know it wasn't English made! As if people couldn't tell by the look of it. I said, if she did, I'd throw it away into the jungle, or give it to a native."

The evening before my departure, I stole out just before dinner, and made my way to the little cemetery. I had told Mr. Pierce I was going, and he had described the exact spot where I should find the grave I meant to visit for the first and last time.

It was not yet dark as the evenings were very long, and I entered the rickety wooden gate with an eerie feeling of awe and sadness. It must be a dreadful thing to be buried in India, so far from one's own country and people, with the sun beating down so pitilessly by day, and the foxes and jackals prowling round at night. The place looked dreary and deserted; on one side of Andrew's grave a tiny cross marked where a baby lay, and on the other side was a little monument erected to the memory of people who were killed in Kuttahpore during the mutiny; further on, the words on a white marble slab told of a young wife's death from cholera, aged twenty, no older than I was myself, and I thought of the husband's hopeless misery when he was obliged to leave her there so lonely and unprotected. I felt thankful then that I had not loved Andrew, and that I was spared the dreadful agony I might have been suffering at that moment.

The following afternoon, all my things were packed and ready,

and the longed for hour had arrived when I was to leave Kuttahpore for ever. The rajah's carriage stood at the Herrings' door, and it now only remained for me to say good-bye to them.

Mr. Pierce was going to drive to the station with me to see me off, and I was taking a native servant down to Bombay, who was capable of looking after myself and my boxes on the journey.

Chatty was in tears. She was honestly sorry to part with me, and when I kissed her I felt that I was at any rate leaving somebody behind who had something more than a mere liking for me ; though I had no doubt she would lavish her affection just as freely on the next person who happened to take her fancy.

Mrs. Herring had packed me a basket with some "star-fish" cakes, and some bottles of soda water, asking me to be sure and return her the empty bottles from Bombay, and the doctor danced round the carriage in an agony of fuss that I should not be in time to catch our train.

Finally I got my farewells over, and Mr. Pierce and I settled ourselves in the carriage. I had taken the first step of my journey towards Gerald, and for the future the only reason the remembrance of the place I was leaving would find favour in my thoughts was, that it was there I had first met him.

We passed Mrs. Argles' house, where I caught a glimpse of a figure in white waving from the verandah. We drove through the sleepy, smelling bazaar, where the dogs lay in the middle of the road as if they were dead, and the dirty little naked children sat lazily playing in the shade of the shops, covered with flies, which they made no attempt to brush off. Their parents lay asleep on low bedsteads made of rough wood and string, or gossiped in little groups while they ate large pink slices of water-melon, which was laid out for sale exposed unreservedly to the dust and flies.

We swung round the corner of the bazaar on to the straight white road, and rattled along just as I had done some six months before when I had driven along it for the first time. Of course, my mind went back to my arrival at Kuttahpore, and all that had happened since, and was to happen now, and I proved a very silent companion ; but Mr. Pierce made no attempt to talk, or disturb my trains of thought, as he was a man who knew instinctively where conversation would be unwelcome.

On arriving at the railway station, we found we had half-an-hour to wait before the train came in that I was going by, so we paced slowly up and down the little platform, while the station-master's children and a few other natives collected in a group to watch our every movement with undisguised interest.

"How glad you are to be going away," said Mr. Pierce, a little reproachfully; "your face got brighter and brighter the farther we left Kuttahpore behind."

"Yes," I said, "you *know* I'm glad. I hope never to see the place again, and there isn't the remotest chance of my ever doing so."

"The most unlikely things happen sometimes," replied Mr. Pierce.

"Oh! For goodness sake don't croak about my coming back when I'm just going away," I said impatiently. "If I return here I must be carried by force, for it won't certainly be of my own free will."

"I suppose Mr. Carey's address will find you, wherever you are?" he said presently. "I may be coming home this year on furlough, and of course I should like to look you up."

I wished he was not coming home. I knew he disliked Gerald, and I thought I could not welcome anybody as a friend who was an enemy of his. However, I said I should be glad to see him, and that of course Mr. Carey's address would always find me, and very shortly afterwards the train came in, and I took my seat in an empty first-class carriage.

"Good-bye," I said, putting my head out of the window.

"You're not off yet," said Mr. Pierce.

I felt quite vexed with him for not seeming in the least concerned at my departure, though there was no earthly reason why he should have been, and I sat in a rather injured silence waiting till the train should move before I again tendered my farewells.

He, on the contrary, talked incessantly, telling me what to do at Bombay, advising me to keep plenty of ice in the carriage on my way down country, and chaffing me about Mrs. Herring's soda-water bottles.

Presently, a native created a hideous din by banging an iron rail suspended in the station, and the train began to move. Mr. Pierce held out one hand, raising his hat with the other, walking

along by the carriage window. "Good-bye," he said, nodding and smiling; "take care of yourself."

I shook his hand silently; he had been very good to me, and I recognized that I was far more sorry to part with him than I would have believed possible. My good-bye sounded slightly unintelligible, and I hurriedly crossed to the other side of the carriage as he stepped back on to the platform and stood to watch the train leave the station.

I wanted to put my head out of the window and see the last of him, but I was determined not to. He was evidently quite unconcerned at my going, and not at all sorry to say good-bye to me, and I felt angry with myself for minding parting with him in the least.

So I settled myself comfortably in a corner, with a book he had thrown in at the last moment, and put Mr. Pierce resolutely out of my mind and thoughts.

(To be continued.)

A Strange Story.

By JOHN H. WILLMER.

HARDLY a time, I think, have I been to the Grant Road Station without seeing, sitting at the foot of the railway bridge, a pensioned-off native soldier. Early every morning he arrives there, and, throughout the day, sits on a small wooden stool which he brings with him. On the approach of footsteps, however, he stands erect, swells out his chest and puts on a military air, and the stick he uses as a crutch he brings sharply to his side at the word of command, "'Tion!" given by himself. If you are liberal and offer him some money, he gladly accepts it, but I have never yet heard him ask any one for alms.

One day I placed a coin in his hand, and to my surprise, he did not *salaam* and bless me as other beggars do. The usual way is for the beggar to receive the money, then look up to heaven and mumble :

"May you live long, Sahib, have plenty of money, a young wife, and a house full of children."

It very often happens that the man who is thus prayed for is already married and his wife old.

Well, as I was saying, I was surprised the man did not bless me, and I was about to resent his coolness, as I thought, when he slowly brought his stick to the shoulder, then to the front, and gave me the "Rôyal Salute." I learned afterwards that he invariably did this to those who presented *him* with alms. In a little while he and I became great friends, and I never pass him by now without a : "Well, Tommy, how are you?" His usual reply is : "In good health ; Allah be praised !" Something told me that this man had a history ; and, to learn it, I longed. One day the opportunity to do so presented itself. It was raining, and Sooleman, or, as he is better known, "Tommy," had crept underneath the bridge for shelter : I was driving by at the moment and saw him. I stopped the carriage, paid the driver his fare, and followed after the old soldier. He was delighted to

see me and gave me his stool to sit on, while he made himself comfortable on a large stone near me.

After a few minutes' conversation, I asked "Tommy" to give me some account of his life while a soldier.

"Sahib," replied he, "I have no objection to do so, but so uninteresting has that portion of my life been that I will but weary you by speaking of it. True it is that I have fought in not a few bloody battles, and have received medals, but I did but my duty. If I fought well, it is not for me to tell of it. But listen now and you'll have something better.

"I was born in Hyderabad, and the very morning that I came into this world, my mother died. My father had loved her much—ay! so true was he to her memory that he took to him no new wife to fill her place. Consequently, I was his only child. My father, he, too, died when I was about twenty years of age. He left me a small fortune, some twenty thousand rupees or more. With this I set out for Bombay, intending to trade with and multiply my small fortune there.

"One morning, early, I arrived at the Byculla Station. I was at a loss what to do next. I knew no one, nor had I been to Bombay before. My heart within me sank.

"I gave in my ticket at the door and walked out. A couple of porters carried, after me, my luggage. Striding up and down, in no easy frame of mind, in the compound at the back, was a well-dressed Mahomedan. I went up to him and asked him if he could recommend to me a good boarding-house.

"'A boarding-house!' he exclaimed: 'of course I can; I keep one myself. Young man, just now I was thinking I would be ruined if no boarders were to come to me shortly. See how good Allah is!'

"'Yea, he is good! I am a stranger here, brother, and he has sent you to me, to befriend me,' I replied.

"He answered not, but hailed a *gharry*. A feeling of distrust crept over me when I caught his greedy eyes noting the contents of my pocket-book when I opened it to pay the porters. Afterwards, I put it down to his being very much in want of money; and as we drove home I, by a round-about means, discovered he was in monetary difficulties. I offered him a few hundred, but he refused to accept even a fraction of that money. Thinking I might vex him, I did not press him to accept the gift.

"I was taken to a large building surrounded by a compound. A room was shown me, and, when I had arranged my things, I lay down in my bed and went off to sleep.

'About two o'clock I was awakened by a servant, who told me some food was prepared for me. I washed and dressed myself, then followed the servant to the dining-room. I noticed the table was laid for three, only.

"'Not many boarders?' I ventured to inquire of the servant.

"He laughed.

"'Not the season,' he replied. 'When the Bombay races are on, my master generally manages to get in a number of Mahomedans.'

"I thanked him, and was about sitting down at the table, when the owner of the house made his appearance, followed by a young woman.

"I was surprised; but Yoosif, the owner of the house, told me he was not particular, and did not at all mind his sister, Ayesha, mingling in male society. Yea, Allah! What a beautiful woman she was. She came and sat near me and conversed pleasantly. I cannot tell you what I said to her. Something foolish, I know, for I frequently caught her brother laughing.

"When we had eaten, fair Ayesha asked me to come and converse with her in the sitting-room, and I, nothing loath, accepted her invitation. We were alone, for Yoosif had left us. Before going out, he said to his sister: 'Now, Ayesha, entertain our guest well. He is a stranger to Bombay, so tell him all you know about it—anything that will, you think, interest him. And you, sir,' this to me, 'make yourself quite at home.'

"I was blindly in love with the girl. At first she encouraged me, but towards dusk her manner changed and she looked sad.

"'What ails you, my beloved Ayesha?' I asked.

"She answered not my question, but presently asked:

"'Would you care to come with me to a dinner-party?'

"'Ask you, your servant, if he care?' replied I. 'Command him and he will dare death for you!'

"'Foolish youth,' replied she. 'What makes you love me?'

"'Allah alone knows,' replied I.

"She heaved a sigh.

"'Is it ever to be thus?' she asked herself, forgetting that I

was sitting by her. 'I make them love me, then help to ruin them. Strange that I decoyed the rest without the least compunction, and yet, for this lad, I do feel sorry—can it be love? Sooleman,' said she, addressing me, 'I am now going to take you—not, as I said it was, to a dinner-party, but—to an opium den. Mind you pretend to smoke. If you obey me not, before morning you will be a ruined man and turned out into the streets to die. First are you drugged, then robbed, and, lastly, carried away from the house to some out-of-the-way place and left. Remember, then, what I have told you about pretending to smoke. Sit you here awhile; I'll dress and be with you presently.'

"She disappeared into her room. I bowed my head and wept. Could it be possible that this girl, with the face of an angel, had a devil's heart! It was too hard for me to understand. But I remembered that she told me she loved me, and I thought that if I could only persuade her to fly with me, how happy I would make her. While yet I sat planning, Ayesha returned and stood before me. All trace of sorrow had vanished from her face. She was dressed in a coloured silk *sari*. On her feet were a dainty pair of slippers. Her head was uncovered, and from the shoulder, downward, save for a few gold and silver bangles, her arms were bare.

"'I am ready,' she said, and I followed her to the carriage, which was ready waiting for us. As soon as we had seated ourselves, the blinds were drawn down to hide us from the crowds that thronged the streets.

"In about half-an-hour the carriage pulled up, and we alighted. 'I suppose I have to call to-night?' said the driver, with a wicked wink. 'Yes,' Ayesha answered, as she led me through a narrow doorway into a long covered passage, along which we advanced a few paces. Then we halted and, cautioning me not to make a noise, Ayesha went forward alone. She was not long away, and when she came to me she said:

"'There is no one about here. Come, I'll show you a sight.'

"We branched off to the left, and after walking for fully three minutes, we halted. Ayesha touched a spring, and a portion of the wall swung noiselessly back. A screen, of some dark-coloured material, hid the opening.

"'Look!' whispered Ayesha. I peeped out, and the sight I

beheld nearly sickened me. Scattered about the large gloomy hall, on benches, the floor—everywhere! were men—and some few women also—smoking opium.

“I’ll describe you the den more minutely, Sahib. Long tables intersected the hall, and on benches, alongside these, lay the majority of the smokers. Each had before him a tiny bowl containing opium—as much as he had paid for—a long thin iron pin and a pipe. At intervals, along the tables, were placed lamps.

“The pipe was unlike anything I had ever seen smoked before. The bowl of it was a Chinese ink-pot; the stem, a reed fixed in the neck of it. A tiny hole was bored in the side of the pot.

“I watched one of the smokers. He dipped the long iron pin into the opium before him, and detaching a modicum of the horrid stuff, he carried it to the lamp; and, as it softened by the heat, he turned it round and round till it was of such a size as to fit the small hole in his pipe. Then he placed this to the flame. It ignited, and he emitted a dense cloud of smoke through his nostrils.

“‘Have you seen enough?’ asked Ayesha.

“‘Quite!’ I exclaimed, turning away. We retraced our steps till we regained the main passage, up which we advanced and entered a well-lighted room, furnished with from ten to fifteen small tables. At most of these were well-dressed persons smoking, in small silver-bowled pipes, opium. On seeing us, Yoosif advanced and bid me welcome. Then he whispered something to his sister, which I did not hear, and left.

“Ayesha now took me to a small table. She put before me a small lamp, a bowl, a silver pin and pipe.

“‘Smoke,’ whispered she, stooping over me. ‘Be not afraid. There is no opium in the bowl. In a few minutes feign drowsiness. Leave the rest to me.’ Then she sat by my side, laughed and, in a loud voice, so that her brother might hear her, coaxed me to smoke.

“I did as she asked me, and when I had emptied half the contents of the bowl, I lay back as if intoxicated, imitating, as much as possible, those around me.

“Towards ten o’clock Yoosif came around waking the smokers, for it was time to close the den. How quietly, without a mur-

mur, the men left their seats and walked away. In about half-an-hour I alone remained with Yoosif and his sister. The former addressed me, and I staggered to my feet. He laughed, for he thought I could be easily managed now.

“‘Go with Ayesha,’ said he, ‘and she will show you a room where you can put up for the night.’

“Then, in a whisper to his sister :

“‘Give him the mixture, and rob him as quickly as possible, for Mahomed will be here shortly. You will find the money in the left pocket of his coat.’

“‘Can’t we,’ asked Ayesha, ‘rob him and turn him out without——?’

“‘Hush, girl!’ interrupted he. ‘It must be done. Do you think he’ll rest without finding us if we turn him out in his senses?’

“Ayesha took me to a small room, which, no sooner had she entered, than she locked the door of, and, sinking upon the ground, wept.

“I was by her side in an instant, and I asked her what ailed her.

“‘Leave me,’ she cried ; ‘I am a horrid thing. If you only knew me, you would not sit by, nor touch me. How many young men have I not robbed after first drugging them. Ah, me! Ah, me! It is sad to think what must have become of them. The majority, without a doubt, must be now inmates of the lunatic asylum.’

“‘I cannot believe this of you,’ I replied, ‘though you yourself tell me.’

“‘Yet, nevertheless, it is the truth,’ asseverated she. ‘I do the coaxing and the drugging and the robbing ; then a villain, employed by my brother, does the rest. You heard my brother say that Mahomed would soon be here : he, Mahomed, is the man. He is our driver too. In a little while you will hear the rumbling of carriage wheels. The people will think he is bringing the carriage to take us home, but to-night he has orders to convey you to some unfrequented street of this city.’

“‘Those young men that I saw to-night, will they——?’

“‘No,’ she said, interrupting me. ‘They are not worth the risk. Only such as you who have plenty of money about them. But we are wasting time. Give me your pocket-book.’

"She lifted herself off the ground and stood facing me.

"I gave her what she wanted, and wondered what she was going to do with it.

"Does Yoosif,' asked she, 'know how much you have herein?'

"No,' replied I.

"Good!' she exclaimed. She emptied the contents of the pocket-book and handed me the notes. Next, from the bosom of her dress, she took others concealed there, and substituted them for the notes she had handed me.

"Where got you these from?' I asked.

"They are my brother's,' Ayesha answered. 'I stole them from his cash-box. He will not suspect when I hand them to him now,' and she smiled at her cunning. 'Now, look you,' continued she, 'sit you here; I must away to my brother, but shall be back anon.'

"She returned in a few minutes and whispered to me:

"Mahomed's come. He'll be here soon.'

"But you've locked the door,' said I.

"She smiled.

"I will show you,' said she. 'Come here,' and I followed her. She pointed me out a trap-door in the floor, a few feet from the cot. I guessed the rest. She handed me a loaded stick, and told me to take my stand behind the screen, close to the trap-door, to wait till Mahomed's whole person was in the room, then strike him on the head that he fall senseless to the ground.

"After giving me these instructions, Ayesha asked me to help her arrange the bed-clothes to look like a figure. We had hardly done this when we heard footsteps ascending. I got behind the screen, and Ayesha, after extinguishing the light, crept into the dark of the room.

"Noiselessly the trap-door opened and a man entered the room from below. On hands and knees he stole to the bed. Then, gradually, his black form lifted off the ground, and, for a second or two, the man stood motionless. Now I saw his hand uplifted to strike with a club the figure on the bed, to make sure of no resistance; then I, putting my whole strength in the stroke, felled him to the ground.

"Ayesha rushed forward and bawled down the trap-door, in a voice resembling, as much as possible, a man's: 'All right! Hand up the sack!'

“‘Here you are,’ came the reply from below. ‘Now, look alive! I’m sleepy.’

“‘If you are in such a hurry, come up and help me,’ said Ayesha.

“‘Ugh! I’d rather be excused,’ replied Yoosif to this invitation. ‘Besides, I pay you to do the dirty work. Be quick. Let me know as soon as you are ready and I will help carry down the sack.’

“‘Why did you ask him up?’ I questioned Ayesha. ‘What if he had come?’

“‘I had no fear of that,’ replied she. ‘I know him too well. Now, no more talk. Here, get into this sack.’

“‘Into this sack!’ I exclaimed.

“‘What brains you men have,’ said she pettishly. ‘This sack was handed up to me to put you in, and——’

“But I understood what she meant now, and I cried:

“‘Ayesha! how can I thank you——?’

“‘Hush!’ and she stopped my speech by placing a hand of hers to my mouth. I gently put it aside and said:

“‘A kiss, Ayesha. I must have one.’

She raised her face and I pressed my lips to hers. I strained her to me, and besought her much to marry me and leave that howling den of shame.

“‘I cannot,’ she cried. ‘I’ve told you I’m a thing to loathe, and not good enough for such as you. Silence! Not a word. Get into the sack. We are wasting time.’

“‘But,’ said I, venturing another question, ‘who is to drive?’

“‘Myself,’ she replied, casting about her Mohamed’s cloak. Come, get in.’

“I did as she bid me, and as soon as she had secured the neck of the sack, she called to her brother to help carry down the load. He came up to the room, now that everything was ready, and I was quickly conveyed to the carriage outside.

“‘Come in the morning for your reward,’ said Yoosif.

“Ayesha answered not, but drove away.

“After we had gone a little distance, Ayesha stopped the carriage and let me out of the sack. And I thought it time, too, for I was feeling far from comfortable.

‘We must part here,’ said the girl in a choking voice. ‘Walk straight on and you will come to a police-station. You will get a bed there till morning.’

“‘Ayesha,’ I pleaded, ‘remain with me. Why go back? Do you not love me?’

“‘Allah alone knows I do. That man, who calls himself my brother, has some strange power over me that I cannot leave him.’

“‘Is Yoosif, then, not your brother?’ I asked with surprise.

“‘No. He promised me, when I was young and foolish to believe anything, to make me his wife: he has not kept his promise.’

“‘Scoundrel!’ exclaimed I. ‘He is not a fit associate for so good——’

“‘Hush, foolish youth! I have told you that you know me not. Sooleman, come near me. Kiss me. Gaze upon me well. This is the last you will ever see of me again. Now, go. Allah protect you!’

“She whipped up the cart horse, and in a few seconds Ayesha was lost to me for ever.

“I hurried on in the darkness towards the police-station, thinking, as I went, of all that had happened to me. Presently I was startled by some one laying a heavy hand on me. I sprang aside, and I saw three masked figures, two to my front and one in rear.

“‘Your purse!’ demanded one.

“‘And look sharp about it!’ advised another. ‘We are impatient to be off.’

“I made a rush at the man on my right. He waited as if to receive me. But, as I struck out at him, he stooped down, and I fell over him and on to my head. Nearly stunned, I staggered to my feet, when I received a severe blow on my head which rendered me senseless.

“Next morning, I was found lying on the road by a policeman, who had me conveyed to the hospital.

“It was days before I recovered consciousness, and as soon as I was able, I went to the police-station and gave a full account of what had happened to me that night.

“They thought me mad.

“‘Do you not believe me?’ I asked. ‘Then where are my twenty thousand rupees? my gold watch and chain?’

“‘You are either mad or an impostor,’ said one polite officer. ‘You’d better leave, or I’ll send you to the lunatic asylum’

“I cursed him, and left.

"I was now a beggar, Sahib. What was I to do? I cast aside pride of ancestry and enlisted in a native infantry regiment, which was in readiness for active service. After many years, I took my pension and returned to Bombay, in the hopes of finding out Ayesha. I made diligent search for her, but without success. Nor was I able to trace out that opium den. Allah alone knows, Sahib, that what I have told you is nothing but the truth, and no dream, as some have said it is. But, Sahib, it has stopped raining. I'll be losing alms if I delay here."

I handed him a rupee. The old soldier stiffened himself, saluted with his stick, faced to the right-about, and with measured steps marched from under the bridge.

A Man of No Estimation.

By ETHEL F. HEDDLE.

"He is a man of no estimation in the world."—*Shakespeare*.

CHAPTER I.

"MRS. HERBERT wore a rich dress of white *duchesse* satin, embroidered in silver, and with the train bordered by white plumes of ostrich ; her bouquet was of magnificent white roses."

These lines, read by a girl who sat by a cottage window, which faced a sweet old-fashioned garden, where the lilacs and laburnums were waving their graceful branches in the summer air, reached the ear of a man who stood just outside the window, and he advanced.

"What is that, Maggie?"

"Oh! I did not know you were there, John," she cried, and the paper dropped in her lap. "It's nothing, only a bit I was reading from *The Lady's Pictorial* ; it's an account of the dresses at the last drawing room."

And then John's brown hand came through the open window, and he took the paper quietly: "I would like to see it."

He walked away down the garden path, till a bend hid him from sight, and Maggie, his sister, looked back into the little parlour.

"Did you ever see the like of that, Annie?"

"John's queer," the second sister said laconically, biting her thread; "he never did take things like other people. He didn't fall in love like other people, and I believe he'll go on loving Constance all his life. As I say, he's queer."

"I wish *I* were in his place," Maggie said with a flush of anger; "I'd be *determined* to be rich; I would go in for laying up money till I was far, far richer than *her* husband, and then I'd get him in my power! Anything to show her the mistake she had made."

"We don't do things like that in real life," Annie said in her matter-of-fact voice. "Besides, you are rather hard on Connie."

"Don't call her that!"

"Very well—on Constance. I don't believe really that she meant to deceive him. She liked him very much, and it was pleasant having some one who adored her; always ready to do her bidding. Of course it was selfish of her to have encouraged him; she ought to have seen, but I think she is sorry."

"What business had she to marry that Herbert man?"

"She loved him, and he was rich. It was quite natural."

The elder sister gave a little angry shrug; she knew she was worsted, but she could not forgive Constance.

"Evil is wrought by want of thought,
As well as by want of heart,"

she quoted. "There's no use in her being sorry now. You read the old song, 'Why did ye gang, lassie?' the verse after the girl coolly says she never meant to deceive him, and that she loved some one else."

"I don't remember the verse."

Maggie quoted it bitterly, and her voice travelled down the garden path to where John stood hidden by the falling golden branches of the laburnum.

"O why did ye look, lassie; why did ye look?
And what when your een met mine, lass?
Wi' your beauty and your art, ye hae broken my heart;
I maun down to the grave loving you, lass!"

John heard, standing there under the beautiful yellow tassels that swayed in the breeze, now falling across his cheek as if with a soft touch, now brushing his hair, and the paper hung listlessly from his hand. Yes, he had never blamed her, never would, but *why* had she looked? Had she not seen that he loved her? She had smiled so kindly; been so gentle and grateful for all he did; given him her confidence with a frank belief and trust in his superior intelligence, that might have deceived any man; and then Guy Herbert, the only son of the rich London banker, had come down to the village, had seen and loved Constance, and had carried her off. It was quite true, she loved Guy, and she had

never loved John ; indeed, she never dreamt of loving him. He was her good—her very great friend, but love, oh, no. And his point of view Constance had never considered ; he was good and kind, the best of men for a friend, but as a lover she had never dreamt of him. A lover was a romantic being, who looked and spoke like Romeo, and John was a very ordinary-looking Scotchman, shy and taciturn and reserved, and with no graces of either person or speech ; and yet the knowledge of what she had done did come to the girl with a pang, when on the night after her engagement she met John in the lane and told him of it. He had grown white suddenly to the lips, and his eyes had looked at her almost vacantly ; it was dreadful to see a man look like that, to see a strong man suffer and make no sign ! He had only asked in a kind of choked whisper if it was true, or if it was only her father's doing ; was she being coerced into it for the money ? for he, John, would be rich some day ; he sailed for the States in a few months with the railway king, Carruthers, who had told him he ought to make his fortune with that brain for figures ; would she not wait ? all he would make would be hers. And then as these disjointed, terrible sentences died away, and Constance understood, she too whitened, for she hated to give pain.

“Why, John, I—I love him.”

He had said absolutely nothing after that, and he had turned away and walked down the country road. She saw what she had done, and how she had unwittingly, though selfishly, deceived him, and her heart smote her. She had taken his all, his love and his life and his hope, and she had given nothing ; and his love, that forestalled every wish and shielded her almost like a mother's, had been very pleasant. She had not been just, and fair, and brave ; if she had been she would have said, “John I ought not to let you do these things for me ; I can give you nothing in return.”

They had not met since that night, and now she had been presented at court after her marriage, and he, John, sailed for New York on Friday.

He read the paragraph through at last, and he pictured her in this beautiful dress, the fairest, surely, amongst all these great ladies ; and then he let the paper fall again from his hand.

“That means she is in London ; I might see her in the street, or driving, maybe ; anyway, I'll try.”

He left the peaceful, sunny old garden then, where the purple

columbines, and the stately lupins, and the dazzling French marigolds were all ablaze in the hot June sun, and he handed the *Pictorial* through the window to his sister. He was glad he had heard her read that paragraph ; for it told him Constance was in London, and he had not dared to ask news of her at all. He would go to Liverpool *via* London and try and see her.

* * * * *

I think John realized what a baseless hope his was as he paced up the sunny side of Regent Street two days after this. He had gone to the park in the morning and had leant on the railings to watch the carriages drive past, but amongst all the fair English faces he saw there, under their dainty headgear, Constance's was not to be found. And he realized what a faint hope was his as he walked up the thronged pavement now, looking keenly at the passers with his deep-set sad dark eyes. Only one more look on the sweet face, only one look, for all the years ! The wish formed itself into a prayer before he knew, and then he was suddenly arrested by a red cloth placed across the pavement from a photographer's door, and as the man before him had paused John paused too. A lady was coming out, her rich white train held in one bare hand, her bouquet in the other, a cloak thrown over her shoulders, and the sunshine sparkled upon her fair hair with its gleaming diamond star and seemed to dazzle John's eyes. And then a stray blossom fell from her posy on the cloth. She looked down at it carelessly, then walked on to the waiting carriage, and John had seized the flower and was walking on too, his face white as it had been on that night in Scotland. For it was Constance ! He had seen her ! He had hardly gone a few paces when he stopped short, for the sound of his name reached him in her voice, and when he turned back she was looking out of the carriage eagerly.

He went up at once, and the girl's soft hand took his in hers. "Oh, John !" she said, "how strange to see you like this ! I caught sight of you passing the carriage. I—I have been getting my photograph done in my drawing-room dress."

"Yes," he said simply, "I saw you. It is a very beautiful dress."

He spoke so naturally and kindly that her eyes seemed to fill with tears. "Then you are not angry with me, John ?" she said,

raising her face like a penitent child's. "I thought you were, and I was so sorry. I have—I have been so angry with myself, to think I had given you pain. But you will forgive me, won't you, and forget all about me, except as one who would always like to be your friend, John."

"Yes," he said, "I will think of you as my friend. There is no forgiveness in the matter. I am very glad you are so happy. We are not likely to see each other, perhaps, again, but if at any time you wanted a friend, Constance—we do not know what the years might bring—or one who could help you or yours, will you remember me?"

She said, "Yes," still with those tear-filled eyes, and then another carriage having driven up, John pressed her hand with a tight grip, gave the upturned face one long look that haunted her, and was gone.

"And I have never asked when he sailed, or where he was staying," Constance said to herself as she drove on. "But surely, surely I shall see him again."

But she did not, for twenty years.

CHAPTER II.

"Thy love to me was wonderful."

THE beautiful grounds of Lady Hamilton's house at Richmond looked their best in this gorgeous June weather, when now, after a late and stormy spring, there had come weeks of cloudless sunshine. The great masses of rhododendrons were a perfect feast of colour, and the house itself was embowered in *gloire de Dijon* roses, honeysuckle and creepers; flowers were everywhere, and the flowers seemed to bask in the hot sun to-day. And this was one of Lady Hamilton's famous "June Saturdays." All the world was here, some boating on the river yonder, some playing tennis under the trees, some eating ices in the tents, some flirting in the garden, some talking in the drawing-rooms, all presumably enjoying themselves. The world to-day seemed a world of light jest and laughter, of falling rose leaves, of perfume and wit and dalliance, of fair women and brave men.

It seemed a very dazzling scene to one on-looker, who was walking slowly under the trees, his friend, a rich American who had brought him, having been carried off by his hostess to be

introduced to royalty. He enjoyed it in his quiet way, as a spectator, for he did not feel in any sense one of these gay people. He thought vaguely that he would like to buy a place down here on the Thames, it all seemed so sunny and sheltered and light-hearted, and he could see the boats on the river with their gay occupants all and every day, in the summer. The man who thought this was our old friend John Gardyne, and it would have been quite possible for John to indulge his taste, expensive toys as Richmond villas are, for he was very rich now, a railway king too, in a smaller way than his friend, and, his two sisters being dead, absolutely without kith or kin. And then as a very pretty young girl passed him with a boy in Highland costume, John suddenly started. "They said she would be here—would she wear a white dress like that?"

And then he smiled a little, remembering, though it seemed hard to do so, that his old love must be over forty now, and that yonder pretty girl might easily be her daughter. He wandered on over the beautiful grass, lost in thought, till he reached a boundary fence and some great clumps of pink rhododendrons, and then he paused, for a voice was speaking in a kind of low and agitated under-tone behind the bushes, and it seemed to him that something was dimly familiar in the voice and in the faint Scotch accent. "Oh, I don't know what to say, Connie. Papa is dreadfully worried, dreadfully ill."

"Then the rumours *are* true?"

"Yes, they are. He says unless they can weather the next few days, unless he can find some one to lend him an impossible sum, we shall be ruined! You see the rumour has got about. That is where the danger lies. If we could weather the next month, all would be well. But there is no money to be got."

"Charlie asked me," the other voice said. "He was so nice, mother; but it is his father, you know. His father said he meant to ask papa, and if it, the report, is true, there could be no engagement. Of course Charlie said he would be true to me, and we could wait, but his father is—so—cruel!" And then there was the sound of a faint suppressed sob, and the little gate beyond the bushes was pushed open. Two ladies came through, one dressed in white India muslin, with a lace scarf tied round her neck, very young and pretty, though her face was tear-stained now;

the other, a slender fragile woman in a soft black silk gown and with long loose suède gloves. She looked at the man standing there with a certain surprise and hauteur, and then her expression changed to one of great amazement and dawning recognition, as she stood still.

John advanced then, "Constance."

"Why, John," she cried then, "is it you? I did not recognize you for a moment. You are looking older—as I am too, of course. For how long it is since we met? What years and years."

"Twenty years," he said. "But I knew you at once. You are not much changed, I think; very little altered. And yet—this must be your daughter. She is like your sister, it seems to me."

He was looking at the young girl so kindly that she held out her hand instinctively, with a gentle look that was very like her mother's. "How do you do?" she said in her sweet English tones, and then she looked round. "Shall I go on, mother dear, and see if father has come, and perhaps you will like to speak to your old friend alone." She was gone, and these two turned then, and Mrs. Herbert's eyes wandered over John's figure and the pleasant, kindly face. He was very grave-looking, she thought; the eyes had a tired look, he had aged fast, much faster than she. And then she met his smile.

"You are wondering if it is really the old John," he said; "you make me feel young again, to see you so unchanged. My hair is quite grey, and yours is as sunny as ever. We grow old young, over yonder. We live two years in one year. It rests one even to see England and breathe English air after the rush of New York. I am very glad to be home again."

"Yes," she said, "and you will come and see us, John? My husband will be so glad to know you. We have two children; Frank is at Eton, and Connie—you saw Connie."

"Yes, she is like your sister, as I said."

"She is engaged to be married," she said with a sigh, "or she was."

And then she broke off, and she seemed to forget to speak for a little; the look of care and terrible anxiety came back to her face, and her lips were locked together. John suddenly bent

his head, and it appeared to him as if the years had fled, and he was telling her, as he had told her twenty years ago, to be his friend and to let him be hers.

"Constance," he said gently, "I am your friend?"

"Oh, yes."

"Then forgive me for being very frank with you. I heard rumours in the City about your husband's firm—I did not know if they were true, and I meant to try and find out if I saw you here to-day, and if you would permit me. And then I heard just now what you said. Let me be your friend."

She looked at him, startled and amazed.

"How, John?"

"Tell me all. The rumours are true? The bank is shaky? Your husband is in desperate want of money?"

"We shall be ruined if he cannot get the money," she whispered. "It is not his fault, John; there is no wrong. My husband is the soul of honour. It would not be a *disgraceful* failure, only times have been so bad, and investments have failed—you will understand; I don't, you know; women never do."

"No," he said; "I see. But your husband will weather the storm all right. In these cases it is only a friendly hand that is needed. I am a rich man with nothing and no one to spend my money on. You will let me be your friend, and your husband's, and Constance's?"

"Oh, John!" she cried, "was any one ever like you! How good you are, how very good! And to remember me all these years!"

"You remembered me," he said, smiling down at her, and then they saw Constance approaching them with a tall man, whose handsome high-bred face looked pale and care-worn, and Mrs. Herbert went up to her husband eagerly and laid her hand on his arm.

She whispered her news to him, and the banker turned to look at the little quiet-looking figure who stood by the fence, his grave Scotch face turned away. This man, on whom few would have wasted a second glance, in his rather shabby coat of un-English cut—was this really his salvation, the John Gardyne, known as only second to the great Carruthers himself? For once he could find no words, and John liked him all the better for the broken

sentences and the proffered explanations, once they could get back to the City.

"I came here," he explained, "to try and deceive the world. They would have it in the papers that I was here, and people might trust me a little longer. But I cannot see how you can do me this immense boon, Mr. Gardyne. It will save me!"

He took off his hat, and let the breeze fan his forehead, and Constance stood looking from her husband's handsome worn face to John's grave and quiet one.

How would she ever thank him?

"Your wife and I were old friends," John said steadily. "We grew up together. It is a great happiness to me to be of use to her and hers," and then he looked round at Constance the younger with a smile, "and to this young lady. If she will let me, I should like to be her friend too."

And then they all turned and walked to the house, and Constance Herbert slipped her hand under the arm of her mother's friend, with a shy and grateful glance.

"I feel as if I knew you already," she said.

And John, smiling down into the eyes that were so like those of his old love, looked happier than he had done for years.

* * * * *

The threatened failure of a well-known bank in the City did not take place, and to-day that institution is as firmly established in public opinion as it ever was. The rumours were said to be false, for the bank met all demands, and no one outside the inner circle knew the true story.

And John Gardyne has bought a villa at Richmond, and there Constance Herbert and her husband stay for weeks together, and their children look upon it as a second home. And when Gardyne is in town he always stays at the Herberts' town house in Berkeley Square, and society says it is an odd thing how devoted the brilliant Herberts are to this little quiet Scotchman, who has never anything to say, and who always seems to want to get away. But he is perfectly happy with the Herberts alone, and Constance, the younger, who is married now, is quite as fond of him as ever her mother was. He goes over to Ireland and stays with her and her husband, and rumour says will leave her all his money. Rich as he is, however, society never cares for him, nor

he for society. He tells Constance he has nothing to say to fine ladies, he is too stupid for the sparkling champagne of their talk. Only he will be quite happy if they let him be their familiar friend, if *they* never tire of him, and Constance laughs at the very idea. Long ago her husband has paid back all the loan, but there is a debt she can never repay.

For this man of no estimation in society's eyes, is her best friend and her husband's, and only she in all the world, she thinks, knows his true worth.

A Royal Fugitive.

By MRS. E. M. DAVY.

“ Charlie, Charlie, wha wadna fight for thee ?
King of all Highland hearts, bonny Prince Charlie ! ”
Jacobite Song.

A HIGH authority has said : “ ’Tis a poor heart that never rejoices.”

Correspondingly mean-spirited must be the individual or nation that cannot be roused to enthusiasm ; and never in the world’s history has more genuine enthusiasm been manifested from an unexpected quarter than that shown by the proverbially “ cautious Scot,” for the cause of Prince Charles Edward Stuart—otherwise known as “ the Young Pretender.”

The object of this paper is briefly to sketch the adventurous wanderings of “ Bonny Prince Charlie ” after the disastrous battle of Culloden Moor until his escape to France, which adventures have been faithfully and lovingly chronicled by his companions in adversity. He is described by them as tall and handsome, of fair complexion, and manners peculiarly winning, graceful and dignified ; and all agree in stating that though exposed to the inconveniences of cold, hunger, thirst and weariness, he invariably maintained “ the most amazing equanimity and good humour.”

When the Highlanders began to fly at Culloden, Major Kennedy seized the bridle of Prince Charles’ horse and turned him forcibly round ; other officers closed up, and together they hurried him off the field. Meanwhile the French forces and some of the Scottish clans kept the English at bay, thus rendering immediate pursuit impossible.

The retreating party, having crossed the river Nairn near Inverness, the prince desired some of the gentlemen to disperse and so baffle the enemy by taking different routes. The attendants who remained with Charles were : Sir Thomas Sheridan, an

Irish gentleman, formerly the prince's tutor ; Sir David Murray ; Sullivan, another Irishman ; John Hay, Alexander Macleod, two serving men (Edward Burk and another) ; also Allan Macdonald, a priest employed as guide.

At ten o'clock that night Charles and his companions proceeded on their journey, and about five next morning reached Glengarry Castle, which they found deserted and stripped of furniture and provisions ; here the prince rested on the floor without refreshment ; but when daylight came, it is recorded, " Burk found a net, which he drew, and catching two salmon they dined very well."

It was deemed prudent to still further diminish the party ; so Sullivan, Allan Macdonald, and Burk as guide, alone remained with the prince, who, dressing himself in Burk's clothes, spent the next night at Mewboll, in Clanronald's country, where he was well entertained, and enjoyed the first good sleep he had had for five days and nights ; he and his army having been in action and under arms without sleep or much food for forty-eight hours before the battle.

The prince waited some hours next day, expecting intelligence from friends, but receiving none, set out alone, on foot, the roads being all but impassable, and walked " through as bad ways as can be conceived." He was then joined by friends, among them Captain O'Neil, who told him that all hopes of drawing his troops together were now over, upon which it was resolved at last to go to the western islands, whence there would be a chance of finding a vessel to take him to France.

One Donald Macleod, who joined the prince about this time, greatly won his favour. He was an old man from the Isle of Skye, and Charles asked him to conduct him through the islands to some safer place. Accordingly Donald procured an eight-oared boat ; and also " bought a pot to boil meat in when they should arrive on shore, and a ' firloft ' of meal, being all the provisions to be got there."

They went on board in the twilight, at Lochnanuagh, where the prince had first landed in Scotland. There were in the boat besides the prince, O'Neil, Sullivan, Allan Macdonald, Donald Macleod, their pilot, and four boatmen. A storm threatened, and they had not gone far before it burst with unusual fury even for that storm-swept coast. The night was dark as pitch, they

had neither pump nor compass and knew not where they were ; but when morning broke they found themselves on the coast of Long Isle, and hauled their boat on dry land ; "having run 32 leagues in 8 hours—a most extraordinary quick passage." So says the record of the time.

The party entered an uninhabited hut, where the prince helped to make a fire to warm the crew, who were almost perished with cold and wet. The prince bought a cow for 30s. and immediately shot her, and they boiled the meat in the pot which Donald Macleod had bought for them. "After which the prince lay down on the floor, having no other bed than an old sail-cloth, and slept very sound ; but the crew were obliged to keep a good look-out by regular watches."

The storm entirely baffled pursuit. They stayed two nights here and then set sail for Stornoway, where Macleod had no doubt he would obtain a good vessel to convey the prince to France.

They took some of the beef with them and set sail ; but, overtaken by another storm, they landed on another small island, and passed themselves off as merchants shipwrecked on their way to the Orkneys ; the prince and Sullivan calling themselves Sinclair, father and son ; and they were hospitably entertained at the house of a farmer. Next day Macleod went by boat to Stornoway, with instructions to freight a vessel for the Orkneys. On receiving word that a ship was ready, the prince with O'Neil and Sullivan set out on foot for Stornoway. It was a wet and boisterous night. They travelled eighteen hours across the hills without refreshment, misled by a guide, which mischance proved fortunate, for had they gone by the intended route Charles would inevitably have been taken prisoner. The men in Stornoway had risen to arms, and Donald had neither time nor means to warn his master. The prince, O'Neil and Sullivan had only six shirts amongst them, and the washing and drying of these seem to have cost no little trouble. Particular mention is made of the prince's prowess in the culinary art. He proved the best cook of the party, and made a cake or bread of the brains of a cow mixed with meal and baked on a stone before the fire, which was greatly relished.

They next set out for the Orkneys, but on their way had to land on several islands, often resting by night in ruined huts that

had belonged to fishermen. These were no better than hog-styes, so ill-roofed that they had to put a boat's sail over the top and lie on the bare floor, keeping watch by turns. They were often short of food and reduced to "drammack," with salt water mixed with meal, and of this the prince would eat heartily.

Frequently they were chased by English ships, and so narrow and even marvellous were their escapes, that Charles would laugh and say: "You see Providence will not let me be taken if I would!"

In the journals kept by Macleod and Burk, mention is made of all occasions on which the prince was visited by friends, and what they brought him: for instance, while in one hut, "the Laird of Clanronald paid his respects and promised assistance to get him out of the kingdom, and his lady sent six good shirts, some brandy and wine, and everything else that was necessary and comfortable."

But dangers thickened. The prince, having only O'Neil with him, was hiding in the mountains near Loch Boisdale. Military forces were on both land-sides of him, and the sea on the other, without any kind of vessel that he could trust.

In this perplexity, O'Neil, having some slight acquaintance with a young lady from the Isle of Skye, named Miss Flora Macdonald, who was then visiting her brother, proposed to her to assist the prince to escape.

The old chroniclers say: "Miss Flora was of the middle stature, well shaped, and a very pretty, agreeable person, of great sprightliness, and abounded with good sense, modesty and humanity."

At first, however, it appears the lady objected, but when O'Neil succeeded in convincing her that the situation of the prince was too perilous to brook delay, she set her woman's wits to work with the result that has become historical.

Taking with her her favourite servant Neil Mackechan, and a certain amount of luggage containing a disguise for the prince, she set out with O'Neil, having first provided herself with an extra passport. This purported to be for one Betty Burke, a spinning woman (spinster), whom she was to take back, as her mother had a great quantity of linen to spin.

Thus she proceeded to the house of Clanronald and acquainted Lady Clanronald with her design; O'Neil meanwhile going back-

wards and forwards with messages to the prince, who was in concealment about eight miles off.

Prince Charles was in a little hut, and cheerfully roasting the dinner—consisting of the heart, liver and kidneys of a sheep—when Captain O'Neil entered and introduced Miss Macdonald and the party accompanying her. They were overwhelmed by compassion and sorrow at seeing the state of affairs, but Charles laughed heartily and said: "The wretched to-day may be happy to-morrow."

They all dined together, and when Lady Clanronald and the rest had gone, Miss Macdonald told the prince it was time to prepare for his departure.

The faithful O'Neil begged hard to be allowed to accompany them, but to this Flora could not consent, and he and the prince took leave of each other in the most affectionate manner.

Flora then desired the prince to put on his new attire, and they proceeded to the shore, where their boat was afloat ready in case of any sudden attack.

They arrived in very wet condition, and made a fire on a piece of rock to dry and warm themselves till nightfall.

They had not been long there when four wherries full of armed men approached the shore, and at this sight they extinguished their fire and hid themselves among the heather; but their fears soon vanished when they saw the wherries sail quietly to the southward within a gunshot of them.

It was about eight o'clock on the evening of the 28th of June that they got on board the boat, but they had not gone a league before the sea became very rough and tempestuous. The prince, seeing that Flora Macdonald and also the sailors began to be uneasy at their situation, sang them some Highland songs; among which was one made for the 29th May, entitled "The Restoration." Thus and by telling merry tales he succeeded for a time in keeping up their spirits. Flora was so exhausted that, notwithstanding the storm, she fell asleep in the bottom of the boat; the prince observing it, covered her as much as he could to save her, and sat by her lest any of the boatmen, in the dark, should step upon her.

Next morning, though clear and calm, the sailors knew not where they were, and making an attempt to land found themselves repulsed by armed forces; at one place they were fired at,

and so they rowed away. Ultimately they landed safe at Kilbride, in the Isle of Skye, at the bottom of the garden of Monggestot. In this neighbourhood some militia were searching for the prince, and their commanding officer was even then at Sir Alexander Macdonald's, the very house to which Flora was going. She left the prince at the boat, and accompanied by her man-servant went to Monggestot. Sir Alexander was from home, but she saw Lady Margaret, who had been apprized of her errand by one Mrs. Macdonald, a kinswoman, who was in Flora's confidence.

When Flora was shown in she found a large company assembled, and at once recognized the militia officer. He presently asked her whence she came, which way she was going and what news she had heard. Her replies to all were so simply and readily spoken that he had not the slightest suspicion what she was about. Before leaving she had a long private talk with Lady Margaret, which resulted in further arrangements being made for the prince's safety; and Kingsborough, a kinsman of the Macdonalds, was sent to apprise him of these plans. When Flora thought sufficient time had elapsed she ordered her horse out and took her leave, accompanied by her servant, the Mrs. Macdonald before mentioned, and her man and maid.

They had not ridden far before they overtook Prince Charles and Kingsborough. Mrs. Macdonald was very desirous of seeing the prince's face, but this he, as much as possible, avoided by turning it to the other side. Once, while wading through a rivulet, the prince lifted his petticoat so high that Neil Mackechan called to him, for God's sake, to take care, or he would discover himself. Charles laughed, but thanked him for his kind concern.

But Mrs. Macdonald's maid could not keep her eyes off the prince, and said to Flora :

"I ne'er saw sic [an impudent-lookin' woman as Kingsborough's a-walkin' wi'. She maun be Irish, or a man i' woman's claes."

Flora replied that she was Irish, for she knew her, having seen her before.

"Bless me, what lang strides she tak's," said the maid. "I believe them Irish women could fecht as well as men."

Flora, not liking the maid's remarks, and knowing that they were nearing the place where the prince and Kingsborough were

to turn off the high road and must not be observed doing so, called out to Mrs. Macdonald to ride on faster, or they would be late. This was done, and they soon lost sight of the two on foot, who presently, after turning out of the public road to avoid the militia, went over the hills and reached Kingsborough's house about midnight on Sunday, June 29th, wet through to the skin, having walked seven miles in a drenching rain. Flora Macdonald arrived about the same time by the highway, having parted with Mrs. Macdonald, her man and maid servant.

Lady Kingsborough, not expecting her husband home at that late hour, was undressed and ready for bed, when one of her maids went up and told her that the laird had returned and brought a fine company with him.

"What company?" asked Lady Kingsborough.

"Milton's daughter and some with her," was the answer.

"Milton's daughter is ever welcome here," said her ladyship, "and with any company she pleases to bring. Make my compliments and tell her to make free with anything in the house; but I am sleepy and undressed and cannot see her to-night."

Presently up came her own daughter, crying:

"Mother, mother, father has brought hither a very odd, muckle ill-shapen wife as ever I saw—nay, has taken her into the hall, too."

At the same moment Kingsborough himself came into the room, and bade his wife come at once and see the company, and he would tell her by-and-by who they were.

When she entered the hall she saw one whom she afterwards described as "a muckle trollop o' a carling." But on her nearer approach the prince immediately rose and saluted her, whereon his hostess trembled. Having felt a rough beard she guessed it was some Jacobite nobleman in disguise, and, hastening to her husband, greatly importuned him to tell her who it was, and when he did so she cried:

"The prince? Then we are a' ruined; we will a' be hanged noo."

"Tut," said he; "we can die but once. If for this it will be in a good cause."

At supper the prince placed Flora on his right hand, paying her the utmost respect. It is said he made a plentiful meal, eat-

ing four eggs, some collops, bread and butter, drank two bottles of small beer, calling afterwards for a bumper of brandy to drink health and prosperity to his host and hostess, and better times to all. Afterwards he smoked an old pipe he carried about with him, which was black as ink and worn to the very stump.

When the prince had retired for the remainder of the night, Flora was called upon to relate his adventures as far as she knew them; and when she had concluded, Lady Kingsborough inquired what became of the boatmen who brought them to that island, and on being informed that they had gone back, she said that was not right—they should have been kept until the prince could get further from his pursuers. Her ladyship's fears proved well grounded, for, as it afterwards transpired, these boatmen were seized and threatened and made to give a description of the prince's disguise, which they said consisted of a linen gown with purple sprigs thickly stamped, and a white apron.

Lady Kingsborough's fears determined Flora that the prince must change his dress.

The royal fugitive enjoyed his unusually comfortable quarters so much that there appears to have been considerable difficulty in arousing him next morning and getting him to make a fresh start. When at length he was partly dressed the ladies went to his room to give him certain finishing touches.

While Flora was arranging his cap Lady Kingsborough told her, in Erse, to ask for a lock of his hair. But the girl refused.

Charles requesting to know the cause of the little altercation, Lady Kingsborough explained, and the prince, laughing, knelt at Flora's feet, and laying his head on her lap, bade her cut off a lock, which she did, and the ladies afterwards shared it between them.

When breakfast was over the prince took leave of his hostess, who presented him with a snuff box, and he thanked her warmly for all her kindness. Then he set off with Kingsborough, who carried a bundle of Highland clothing, and when they came to a wood Charles changed his dress. The female attire was concealed in a bush and afterwards carried to Kingsborough's house, where, on the alarm of a search, it was all burnt save the gown. This was kept as a precious relic and heirloom. It was, as before described, of linen, thickly stamped with a purple sprig.

After an affectionate parting with Kingsborough, the prince

proceeded to Portree, escorted by Mackechan and a little herd-boy as guide, while Miss Macdonald went on horseback by another route.

Here Charles bade a tender farewell to his fair preserver, and his last cheering words were these: "Well, Miss Flora, I hope we yet shall ride in a good coach and six before we die, though we be now a-foot."

A week later Captain Ferguson, having obtained an exact description of the disguise worn by Charles, was in hot pursuit. Arrived at Sir Alexander Macdonald's house, he searched it very strictly, but hearing only of Flora Macdonald, he went on to Kingsborough, and here he demanded to see the rooms occupied respectively by Miss Macdonald and her spinning woman, and remarked that the room of the mistress was inferior to that of the maid.

Kingsborough was seized, plundered of his shoe buckles, garters, watch and money; thrown into a dungeon and loaded with irons. He was removed later to Edinburgh Castle and there kept till July 4th, 1747. A year's imprisonment! That one night's lodging given to the prince cost very dear!

After her adventure, Miss Macdonald returned to her mother's house; but about ten days later, while out riding, she was taken prisoner by an officer and party of soldiers, who neither permitted her to return home to bid her friends good-bye nor to send for a change of clothes. She was hurried on board the "Furnace," where she greatly dreaded the reputed cruelty of Captain Ferguson; but, luckily for her, General Campbell was on the ship, and he gave orders that she should have a maid to attend her, a private cabin, and in all ways be treated with the utmost respect and consideration. Three weeks later General Campbell permitted her to go on shore and take leave of her friends, though in custody of two officers and a party of soldiers. She was subsequently taken on board Commodore Smith's ship to London, where she sat for her portrait to be painted by the commodore's request. After five months' detention on shipboard she was released, in July, 1747, and allowed to return to Edinburgh unquestioned.

The further adventures of Prince Charles among the Scottish isles, if related in detail, would prove somewhat monotonous with one or two exceptions. He is described as sometimes bare-footed,

wearing a long beard, a soiled shirt, an old black kilt coat, a plaid and philibeg, a pistol and dirk by his side, a gun in his hand. He was always cheerful, and appeared in the best of health.

One day, when he and his little party were famishing with hunger, having been forty-eight hours without food ; he saw a small hut with smoke issuing from a hole in the roof. Against the advice of his companions he entered boldly, and there found some half-dozen men dining off a piece of boiled beef. These men were noted robbers, and one of them recognized the prince, but not deeming it safe to enlighten the rest at first as to the identity of their unbidden guest, he called out : " Ha ! Dougal M'Cullony, I am glad to see thee." Charles, thus invited, and guessing that he was known, sat down, ate heartily, and all were very merry. The robbers rejoiced they had it in their power to serve the royal fugitive, and he remained with them some time. Regularly every day they mounted guard over him, placing sentry-posts at the head and foot of the glen, and had a foraging party of two to fetch provisions. These poor fellows probably had scarcely a shilling amongst them, yet were proof against the reward of £30,000. Another incident : One Roderick Mackenzie, a merchant of Edinburgh, who had been with the prince, was accosted by some soldiers in mistake for Charles, to whom he bore some resemblance. Mackenzie tried to escape, but failing that, determined to die sword in hand for the Jacobite cause. His bravery confirmed the soldiers in their mistake, whereupon one of them fired at him, and as he fell he called out : " You have killed your prince ! " and expired instantly. The soldiers, overjoyed, cut off his head and carried it to Fort Augustus to claim the £30,000 reward. The belief that Charles was killed caused a less strict watch to be kept, by which means his escape from place to place was managed with comparatively little danger.

While the royal fugitive was being closely pursued in Scotland, the scaffolds and gibbets of England were preparing for, and in operation on, his adherents. Of two hundred and nineteen persons tried, seventy-seven were executed, among whom were seventeen officers, who were " hanged, drawn and quartered " on Kennington Common ; nine executed in the same manner at Carlisle and eleven at York. A few obtained pardon, and many were banished to America.

In the middle of September Charles received word that two French vessels awaited him on the west coast at Moidart. To all friends within reach he sent an offer to avail themselves of this chance of escape, and himself set out that very night, as many as could, joining him. He embarked on a Nantes privateer, September 29th, 1747, which conveyed him after a good voyage safely to France.

The king and queen received him with open arms. He was fêted, flattered, complimented and caressed.

The entire French court combined to lull him into forgetfulness of their breach of past promises ; and here, basking for a brief space in the smiles of the fickle goddess, we may leave him.

"The House that Jack Built.

By DARLEY DALE,

Author of "FAIR KATHERINE," "THE VILLAGE BLACKSMITH," etc.

CHAPTER XXXI.

JACK'S HOUSE FALLS.

JOY'S engagement to Major Graham had been a great surprise to Jack Lockwood, and she had sunk a few degrees in his estimation since he heard of it ; he could not marry her himself, but he did not wish any one else to do so.

It was selfish, he knew ; but had he been consulted he would have liked Joy to remain unmarried for his sake.

Why did she want to be married ?

He was sure before he went to Oxburgh that she did not love Graham. Why, then, was she going to marry him ?

But when he was at Oxburgh, he was by no means so sure of the state of Joy's feelings ; she puzzled him ; she was an enigma which he could not guess, a problem he could not solve.

Her manner to him was friendly but reserved, and it was the reserve which puzzled him ; was it a screen to hide the fire behind it, or was the fire out and the screen put up to hide the empty grate ? In other words, did she assume this reserve to hide her feelings for him, or had she really ceased to love him ?

Of one thing he was certain, Joy was not happy, so much he could vouch for ; her laugh when romping with Gladys, pretty though it was, did not deceive his quick ears, which detected the ring of sadness in it.

Was she fretting for Graham ?

Jack did not believe it possible, for there was nothing to prevent her from marrying him at once if she wished to do so.

What then was the cause of her unhappiness ?

Before he had answered this question, there came that telegram which summoned Mr. Lockwood to Jersey, and turned the current of his thoughts into another direction. Nevertheless, during the

long tedious journey to Jersey, as they lay at anchor for ten hours, the screech of the fog-horn the only sound, a dense white mist the only sight, which reached their ears and eyes, Joy's sad laugh and great melancholy eyes set in her fresh young face haunted him.

The shock which greeted him the morning after he reached Jersey, when in the bank manager's private room he learnt that the cheque for four hundred pounds had been presented by Felix Oxburgh on the Saturday before they left Jersey, drove all thought of Joy from his mind.

In a moment the truth flashed upon him ; it never entered his head to suspect Felix ; he guessed at once Amy had altered the cheque. He asked to see the cheque, but before producing it the bank manager begged leave to put a few questions to him.

"How many cheques did you draw out on Saturday, Mr. Lockwood ?"

"Two, one for my tailor and one for Mrs. Lockwood," answered Jack.

"And what was the amount of Mrs. Lockwood's cheque ?"

"Forty pounds ; here it is on the duplicate," said Jack, producing his cheque-book, on which "Amy, £40" was duly entered.

"To whom did you make the cheque payable ?"

"To bearer, as I knew Mr. Oxburgh would probably cash it for my wife."

"Yes, he did, and remarked upon the largeness of the amount ; Mrs. Lockwood was at the door in her pony carriage at the time. Now I will show you the cheque, Mr. Lockwood, and you will see it is for four hundred pounds," said the manager, ringing a bell.

The clerk who answered the bell brought the news that Mr. Felix Oxburgh was waiting in the bank with his father.

"Very good ; bring me that cheque of Mr. Lockwood's," said the manager, and when the clerk had left the room, he turned to Jack and said :

"Mr. Lockwood, this is a very serious business. As far as I can see, only two people could possibly have altered that cheque, the person who presented it or the person to whom you gave it. Allow me to ask you, do you know Mr. Oxburgh intimately ?"

"Yes, very ; it is quite impossible that he should have altered the cheque ; I am as certain of his innocence as I am of my own," said Jack.

Here the clerk returned with the cheque, which the manager handed to Mr. Lockwood, who examined it carefully.

"That is not my writing," he said after a brief examination, pointing to the words "four hundred pounds."

"Is the rest of the cheque yours?"

"Yes, to the best of my knowledge; if the second cipher is mine it was an error, for I certainly intended to draw up the cheque for forty pounds; I think in my hurry I must have omitted to fill in the amount in writing."

"In that case, would Mrs. Lockwood be likely to have filled it in for the larger sum?"

"No, because I told her when the forty pounds was drawn it would leave a balance only of ten pounds; this was true, because the four hundred pounds was not mine."

"And Mrs. Lockwood had no means of knowing that that sum had been placed to your account?"

"Not that I know of; she could have learnt it, though, from my pass-book, to which she had access."

"Excuse the question, but would Mrs. Lockwood have had any use for so large a sum of money?"

"Not that I am aware of; forty pounds ought to have sufficed to pay her bills."

The manager looked very grave.

"It is a very delicate matter for me to deal with, but my advice to you, Mr. Lockwood, is to find out who altered the cheque, and it will then be for you to decide what further steps are to be taken. Perhaps it will turn out Mrs. Lockwood was under the impression you intended to give her a cheque for four hundred pounds and filled in the blank space unaware that it was illegal to do so; ladies are very ignorant of business matters. At any rate, you may rely upon this: if you can settle matters with Mr. Hyde, what has transpired here will not be known outside the bank."

It was clear to Jack that the manager suspected Amy, and was willing to hush the matter up, and feeling morally certain himself that she was the culprit, he could not resent the suspicion, but it was the bitterest pill he ever swallowed when he stammered out his thanks.

"Mr. Hyde is already paid; I sent him another cheque this morning on another bank, having paid in the amount before I

came here. I am practically still at his mercy, for if he chooses to say I had appropriated his money even for a day or two I am a ruined man ; I shall be obliged to resign my commission and my career is at an end."

"I see that. It is a very serious matter for you, Mr. Lockwood, and you have my warmest sympathy. All I can do is to repeat my assurance that what has transpired shall never be known outside these walls," replied the manager.

This was very satisfactory as far as it went, but unfortunately it did not go far enough ; it would neither stop Mr. Hyde's tongue, nor heal the wound Amy's conduct had opened in her husband's honour.

Pale and haggard he mounted his horse on leaving the bank and, urging it into a gallop, rode furiously out of the town, with no special purpose in view beyond wishing to get away from his fellow men, in whose eyes he felt disgraced for ever.

Once clear of the town and its suburbs he let the horse choose its own road, only asking of it to keep up the furious pace they were travelling at, and presently he found himself galloping down one of the green valleys which intersect the island ; the cold January wind failing to cool his heated pulses, but the violent exercise numbed the mental pain he was enduring.

The best mental anæsthetic is physical pain, the second best physical exertion.

The tethered dun-coloured cows turned their great meek eyes to look at the horseman who dashed wildly past, and then resumed their munching of the sweet meadow grass and the swedes which supplemented it, blissfully ignorant of the mental pain their master, man, is capable of suffering.

One or two Jersey farmers, ruminating on the price of potatoes, passed him on the road and wondered if he were mad.

He was not mad, he was only miserable ; he was a wiser and a sadder man than he had ever been before ; he knew now to his cost on what foundation he had built his house, for now that the floods had come and the storms beat it was tottering on the shifting sand, and the fall thereof was imminent.

At present he could not face his trouble, he was flying from it ; he dare not pause to think how he should face his colonel and his brother officers with his tarnished honour ; still less dare he think how he should meet his wife. Once, as they slackened

their pace while mounting a hill, the image of Amy, smiling, fair and beautiful, rose up before his eyes, and a spasm of impotent rage swept over him ; he gnashed his teeth, he clenched his hands, he muttered a deep curse beneath his breath, and he felt for one horrible moment that he could have torn her limb from limb in his rage were she within his reach.

He understood for a few brief seconds how unpremeditated murder might, under deep provocation, be possible even to a husband, and he loathed himself for understanding it.

He spurred on his horse to escape such horrible thoughts, and rode on and on until at last he found himself at a place called l'Etacq, a large rock which forms the northern arm of the bay of St. Ouen. He put up his foaming horse at the inn and then walked down to the beach, where the roar and tossing of the stormy sea soothed his storm-tossed soul.

It was blowing heavily. Far across the bay, whose green waters were lashed into white foaming breakers by the wind, lay the dim outline of the other islands. On the rocks the curlews screamed ; the guillemots and puffins sat in rows, watching the storm, and quarrelled for the best places. Over the angry billows hovered in graceful curves the sea-gulls, uttering their mournful cry ; but the melancholy notes of the sea-birds sounded to Jack Lockwood as the cry of agony of an imprisoned soul, and expressed his own grief and were in harmony with his feelings.

He walked across the beach, past the great stacks of *vraic* and the men who were collecting it, to the rock which gives its name to the spot, and with some difficulty, for it was blowing furiously, climbed to the top. Here he was obliged to lie down flat on his face, as it was impossible to stand in this exposed spot against the wind that was blowing, and there for upwards of an hour he lay fighting it all out with himself, facing it all—the disgrace, the ruined career, the future, if it came to the worst and he were forced to resign his commission. He slurred over nothing, but looked straight at the worst, as he thought, which could happen.

But he never once even glimpsed what did happen.

And as he lay there the wind whistled over him and moaned sadly round him, the sea roared, the waves sobbed and sighed and tossed up their arms in despairing agony as they fell dying on the sands, heart-broken, while the sea-gulls and curlews chanted their funeral song.

The ocean surely has its sorrows, or what an actress it is, counterfeiting so perfectly all the outward signs of woe.

Jack Lockwood was too conscious of his own suffering to pay any heed to the sea and its griefs. He was not even conscious of the howling wind which swept over his prostrate body ; all he felt was the storm which was passing over his soul.

How could he ever take back to his heart this woman whom he had never really loved, and who had robbed him not only of money—that was a mere vulgar trifle in comparison—but of his honour also ?

How could he respect her, honour her, love her, cherish her, as he had vowed to do ?

She had robbed him of Joy's love when she married him, but not content with making shipwreck of his happiness then, she had made shipwreck of his life now.

Honour, position, career—all were gone.

What could he do now but go out to some colony and hide his diminished head ?

What other course was open to a man who was accused of appropriating money intrusted to his care by another man ?

He must send in his resignation, break up his home and emigrate with his wife and children. Amy would probably refuse to go with him, but he would make her go, for he would not be parted from the children. It was only fair that she should be made to suffer for her sin, and he could, he thought, hardly have hit upon any punishment Amy would feel more than to be taken away from the round of social pleasures in which she so delighted.

In his present mood he took a certain grim satisfaction in the infliction of this punishment, for his anger was very great.

At last he rose to his feet, and though he could scarcely stand against the wind that was blowing, he gazed at the wild scene around him, fascinated by the tossing waves and storm-driven foam. Great grey clouds were scudding swiftly over the angry sky, casting purple shadows on the green sea, lashed near the land into masses of dazzling white foam, which dashed up as high as the huge stack-shaped rock on which he stood, as the breakers broke over the red granite rocks below.

And as he gazed a great temptation swept over him. Why not let the wind carry him off the rock into the surging billows below ? Would it be suicide ?

It required no active measures. He had merely to remain passive, to cease to strive to stand against the wind, and let it dash him down into those green depths and hide him and his sorrow and his shame for ever.

What was to prevent him ?

Fear of the future ?

Scarcely. The future was all so dim and vague. Reason could tell us so very little about it, and faith—well, his was the faith of the average Englishman, who believes just as much or as little as his private judgment sees fit.

Love of life ?

Hardly ; for what was there left to him in life worth living for ?

Wife ? home ? honour ? glory ? love ?

None of these.

What, then, should hinder him ?

Was there nothing in all this beautiful world to hinder him from leaving it ?

Stay ; yes.

There was something, after all.

A child-kiss, a child-smile, a child's laugh, a child's arms round his neck, a child's tears when he left it, a child's words of welcome—surely these were worth living for. And as a vision of little Gladys, as he had last seen her in Joy's arms, her soft rounded cheek resting on the girl's shoulder, rose before him, he turned on his heel and clambered away from the raging sea, yawning to receive one more victim, down on to the yellow sands streaked with the purple fronds of the *vraic*.

And once more a little innocent child had unconsciously proved the salvation of a strong man ; for the regenerating power of a pure child-soul is very great.

As he walked back across the beach, the fresh salt smell of the sea strong in his nostrils, a gleam of sunshine lit up the pale mauve outline of Guernsey on the horizon, and seemed to him a presage of good. There was sunshine, after all, to be found in the new home he was to make beyond the seas.

He had left the squire and Felix to their own devices all this time, and when he got home, after lunching at l'Etacq, he found they were gone to Saumarez to see Miss Keppel. So he awaited their return as patiently as he could.

They returned between four and five, and having told him all

they had learnt from Miss Keppel, urged him to go to the colonel at once and lay the whole matter before him.

At first Jack demurred at accusing his own wife, though he had proof of her guilt of such a crime, but the squire overruled him, and even Felix agreed that it was absolutely necessary for Jack to establish his own innocence.

"But there is no need to accuse Amy. I will be the scapegoat if only you can persuade my father to let me ; accuse me and spare her, Lockwood," said Felix.

There was silence for a minute, and Felix hoped his father was relenting, when Jack said bitterly :

"No, Felix ; she is not worth the sacrifice."

This was the first and last comment Jack was heard to make on his wife's conduct ; but there was a whole world of bitterness in it.

The squire had not a word to say in favour of his favourite niece's conduct ; in his heart he agreed with Jack, but Felix pleaded for her : "It was a sudden temptation, but I am sure she meant to repay it, and she did not know the money was not yours."

Jack did not reply ; he buttoned on his overcoat, and looking very ill and careworn, started to see his colonel, feeling as miserable as he thought man ever felt.

While he was gone the father and son discussed his prospects, but neither of them took a very hopeful view ; they both feared he would be obliged to send in his resignation.

"Which is practically ruin," said the squire.

"Fortunately he is an excellent officer," said Felix.

"True ; but this colonel is a very fussy man. Lockwood says his old colonel would have done anything for him. What a pity he ever exchanged That, again, was all Amy's doing. She has been the curse of his life," said the squire angrily.

"So much will depend on this Mr. Hyde ; but now he has got his money, he can have no object in talking of it," said Felix.

"Except spite, which I understand he feels against Lockwood and Amy, whom it appears he admires, but who will have nothing to do with him. With all her faults she seems to have been a model wife in some ways, and yet I don't believe she cares a brass button for her husband ; she only married him to spite Joy."

"I think you are wrong there, sir ; she did not care for Lockwood when she married him, but she is in love with him now."

"Poor child, she won't go unpunished, then, for it is very clear there is not much love on his side of the house. I am afraid there is very little happiness in store for them; he is not a man to forgive such an injury easily."

"I fear not. It has been a most unfortunate marriage. It began badly and it seems likely to end even worse than it began."

"As Selsey would say, Jack built his house on the sand, and it fell, and great was the fall thereof. Poor Jack!"

"Here he is at last," said Felix, as the only hansom Jersey possesses drove up to the door. "He has been gone nearly two hours. I wonder what the result is?"

"We shall know directly," said Felix.

And as he spoke the door opened and Jack walked in.

CHAPTER XXXII.

WILL HE FORGIVE HER?

"WELL, what news?" said the squire, as Jack entered the room looking very tired, but flushed and excited.

"Better than I thought possible. We have silenced Hyde, and the colonel won't hear of my sending in my resignation. He was most kind and spoke much more highly of me than I deserve; he even went so far as to say he hadn't a better officer in his regiment, which, seeing I have joined it so lately, was very handsome of him," said Jack.

"Bravo. I congratulate you with all my heart; I am delighted to hear it has ended so well," said the squire.

"You'll be still more delighted to get some dinner, I think, sir. Shall we go in? We shall have to wait on ourselves in the absence of Green, but I know you won't mind that once in a way," replied Lockwood.

"I am glad of it, for you can tell us all about Mr. Hyde during dinner," said the squire, who was curious to hear all particulars.

"At first I thought my military career was at an end for ever, the colonel looked so grave as I told him the story, but as soon as he heard the money belonged to Hyde, his face brightened, and he said, 'Hyde; then I think we can soon settle it.'"

"Oh! but I thought that was the very difficulty, to make this Mr. Hyde hold his tongue?"

"So I thought, but luckily for me the colonel knew Hyde well, too well, I fancy, and had some hold over him. What it was I

was careful not to inquire ; all I positively know is, five minutes' private conversation was sufficient to obtain his solemn promise not a syllable about my cheque being dishonoured should ever pass his lips, and he swore he had not mentioned it yet to any one."

"Bravo ; you have seen him then ?"

"Yes, we have been round to his house."

"Does he know how the cheque came to be dishonoured ?"

"He may suspect ; all the colonel told him was I had been robbed."

"Well, it has ended far better than you anticipated, Jack, my boy," said the squire.

"It has, sir ; to all outward appearances I am none the worse ; my domestic happiness is of course hopelessly ruined ; my honour is saved. I must be thankful for small mercies," said Lockwood bitterly.

"He will never forgive her," thought the squire, "and I suppose it is hardly to be wondered at. I shall never feel quite the same towards her myself."

But Felix pitied her from his heart ; he guessed she was suffering acutely now ; he foresaw bitter suffering in store for her in the future, divining as he had done that she loved her husband, and feeling sure Lockwood would never return her love ; but it is the unexpected which really happens, and the actual truth he did not foresee.

Jack's colonel had advised him to leave the island the next morning, lest the gossips of the place should speculate as to what had brought him back to Jersey during his leave, and the squire, though rather sorry not to see more of the island, agreed to go with him, while Felix was glad their stay was not to be prolonged.

"I think I must go to Saumarez this evening and tell Aunt Sophy the result of my visit ; Amy is a great favourite of hers, so I am sure she will be anxious," said Jack.

"Let me go for you, you are dead beat now," said Felix.

"Well, I confess I am very tired, though I have done nothing to-day," said Jack ; and accordingly Felix hired a horse at some stables close by and rode out to Saumarez Cottage, little thinking what fond hopes he was kindling in the breast of a certain little lady by so doing.

It was past ten o'clock when Felix arrived ; night prayers were going on in the drawing-room, when a horseman was heard

riding up to the door, to the great distraction of Miss Lydia, whose romantic little mind immediately conjured up a vision of a young handsome squire, singularly like Felix, riding up to carry her off as his bride.

Surely Sophy would cut short the dreadfully long prayer of Bishop Blomfield's she was reading, or the knight would think they were all in bed and ride away without his bride. But Sophy was deaf to the door-bell and read devoutly on, and Miss Lydia suffered a small martyrdom, till on the third ring the parlour-maid crept from the room and opened the door.

"Who can it be at this hour?" said Miss Keppel, when at last she rose from her knees.

"I think I can guess," simpered Miss Lydia with flushed cheeks, putting Byron, with whom she had been solacing herself all the evening, out of sight.

"Don't be a fool, Lydia," said Miss Keppel sharply.

"Mr. Felix Oxburgh," announced the servant.

"I knew it," muttered Miss Lydia in a tone of triumph as Felix walked in and began to apologize for his late visit.

"Better late than never," sighed Miss Lydia, congratulating herself that she looked at least ten years younger in her dinner dress than she really was, and thinking even the sceptical Sophy could have no doubt as to the object of this late visit.

A sudden fit of modesty seized her as Felix sat down to tell them what he had come for.

"Shall I leave you with Sophy?" she asked with a blush and a little nervous laugh.

"Oh dear, no, Miss Lydia; what I have to say concerns us all," said Felix innocently.

It was coming at last, then, the long-desired moment. "It concerned them all;" those words in themselves were tantamount to a proposal, thought Miss Lydia as she played nervously with the cribbage board, and wondered what Sophy would do when both "her girls" were married and she had no one to play cribbage with her.

But alas! alas! as we know, Felix's errand only concerned Miss Lydia in a very remote degree; in fact, as she afterwards indignantly told herself, it did not concern her at all; she did not care a rush what happened to that odious little Amy—whom she guessed Felix felt more than a cousinly interest in—or her husband.

And when at last Felix went away without one word of any

intentions, beyond one of leaving by the mail the next morning, Miss Lydia's pent-up feelings found vent in a violent fit of hysterics, which kept the house up till midnight.

All unconscious of the commotion he had caused, Felix went out into the night to find it had begun to snow, and there seemed every prospect of a deep fall, on hearing which the squire decided to postpone crossing till the following day ; but Jack, who saw no fun in lying *perdu* all day in Jersey, decided to go in the morning as he had originally intended.

"I must write to my wife to-night, then, but I shall say nothing about Amy, Jack ; the fewer people we tell the better ; no one knows it but the colonel, her aunts and ourselves ; no one else need know it. What do you say, Felix ?" said the squire.

"It will never pass my lips, sir, and the Miss Keppels told me they should never breathe it to any one."

"You may be very sure I shall not ; but Amy has no right to expect such consideration from any one else," said Jack, looking so grave and stern that the squire pitied his pretty niece and ventured to say something in extenuation of her conduct.

"You must not be too hard on your wife ; women don't understand money matters ; she is young and beautiful, and vain and extravagant ; it was no doubt a great temptation," said Mr. Oxburgh.

"I think she hoped to have repaid this money and paid her bills without your knowing how heavy they were," put in Felix.

"Possibly," said Jack coldly, and the squire and his son afterwards agreed that it did not do to interfere between husband and wife ; to make excuses for Amy did not tend to conciliate Lockwood ; on the contrary it seemed probable he would be more inclined to forgive her if other people were severe on her.

There was a certain amount of love of opposition in Jack Lockwood's character, which often inclined him to take the opposite view to that held by his companions for the mere sake of doing so.

In the present instance there was, besides this tendency to fly off at a tangent from a given point, a sense of gallantry which would have made him defend his wife had others attacked her, guilty though he knew her to be.

He had plenty of time to consider what he meant to do about her as he paced the deck of the steamer in the snow the next day, for the snow delayed the boat, and instead of getting to Southampton at six they did not arrive till late at night.

All day he brooded over his wrecked life, for though, thanks to his colonel, his career would not suffer, yet his inner life was wrecked. He never had loved his wife, but now he could not respect her either ; all trust and confidence in her were gone ; there could now be not even friendship between them, although to all appearances their relations would remain unaltered.

This he decided he should tell Amy at once ; he should go to her alone and demand a full confession, and then he should pass sentence as coldly as any judge might do to a criminal he would never see again.

In the presence of others they were to behave as they always had done, but there all intimacy between them would end ; there could never be any conversation beyond the merest common-places ; for even community of interest would only exist to a certain point.

As for forgiveness, this did not enter into his scheme at all. He should forgive her so far as to take no proceedings against her ; more than this she had no right to ask ; more than this in his present mood was impossible for him to give.

It was so late when they reached Southampton that he decided to sleep there and go up to town by an early train, in time to catch the midday express from Liverpool Street. The snow was deep the next morning, and knowing the time of his arrival at Oxburgh would be very uncertain, depending upon the state the roads were in, he did not telegraph to say why he had not come by the early train, nor to tell them to meet him by a later.

He would hire a fly at the station when he did arrive, and thus he would be independent, and the Oxburghs would be saved the trouble of sending down several times on the chance of his arrival.

He inquired when he arrived at the station, late in the afternoon, if any one had been to meet the early train from Oxburgh Hall, and was rather surprised to find they had not. He fancied the station-master eyed him curiously, and contrived to infuse sympathy into his manner. Was it only fancy, or had the man heard what had happened ? Had it got wind in spite of all precautions ?

The roads were perfectly passable, so it was not the snow, he thought, which prevented any one from meeting him. No doubt Amy's guilty conscience had kept her at home, but it was odd

Joy had neither driven down herself nor sent Green or a groom to meet the train he had specified.

The more he thought of it the less he liked it, and the slight did not tend to mollify his anger, and by the time he reached the hall he was cross as well as angry.

It was twilight when he drove up, and the shutters were all closed, the curtains drawn for the night. Rather early to close up, he thought ; but he supposed they were glad to shut out the snow and the cold.

He pictured them at tea in Mrs. Oxburgh's room ; Joy, fresh and fair, with a sad look in her great eyes, busy among the cups and saucers ; Amy, gay and beautiful, lounging in the most comfortable chair in the room, looking as innocent of all crime as a new-born babe.

Would she tremble when she heard his step ? Would she turn pale at the sight of him ? Would she meet him with a careless laugh ? Surely she would not dare to do this ; it would be bad for her if she did, he decided. But Amy did none of these things.

Nothing happened as he had anticipated ; apparently, he was not expected, for the footman who opened the door to him started as if he had seen a ghost, and without staying to divest him of his great-coat or to pay the flyman, ran away.

The house seemed strangely silent, and Jack's voice, as he talked to the man who had driven him up, seemed to wake the echoes. Just as he had closed the hall-door, and was wondering what the footman meant by behaving so strangely, the man returned, followed by Mr. Selsey and Green, both of whom looked so pale and ill-at-ease that Jack could not help noticing it.

"Has anything happened ?" he asked, as Green and the footman pulled off his overcoat.

"Yes ; come in here and I will tell you," said Mr. Selsey, slipping one arm through Mr. Lockwood's, and leading him into the library he closed the door gently behind him.

A large fire was burning in the stove, and Jack instinctively walked towards it. It was inviting after his long cold journey and the strange reception he was meeting with on his arrival.

His thoughts at once flew to Mrs. Oxburgh, whose delicate state of health was always a source of anxiety to the family. If

anything had happened to her during the squire's absence, he should never forgive himself for taking him to Jersey ; and his anger against his wife waxed stronger as he waited to hear what Mr. Selsey had to tell.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

IN THE SNOW.

THE day Jack Lockwood spent in finding out how his wife had robbed him was no less miserable for her than for him. The weather in itself was enough to depress every one at Oxburgh except Joy's dog, The Captain, and the day of doom itself must dawn before any climatic influence is strong enough to affect a fox-terrier's spirits.

It was bitterly cold, and a thick veil of dark cloud hung over the sky, the forerunner of a deep fall of snow, so at least Perriam, who was weather-wise, prophesied.

Mrs. Oxburgh was not so well as usual ; the anxiety about her husband had told upon her delicate health ; the children were cross and fretful ; Joy was sad, and Amy, try as she might, could not conceal the restlessness which possessed her. Every time the door-bell rang her heart seemed to stop beating, and she dreaded lest it should be a telegram to say her guilt was discovered.

Until four o'clock, however, nothing was heard from Jersey. Jack must surely know the truth by now. What course would he pursue ?

Would he prosecute her ?

Would he denounce her ?

Would he tell her uncle John and Felix of her ?

Strange to say, Felix was the one person in the world she did not mind knowing of her sin. Indeed, had he been near her, she would have told him. It would have been a real relief to her to tell some one, and Felix, she knew, would take a more merciful view of the matter than any one else in the world.

The more she thought of it, the more impossible it seemed that any one should believe him guilty of such a crime, and as the day wore on she made up her mind he should not suffer for her fault ; she would do one good thing before she died, she would write to her husband and acknowledge her fault.

She could not live with this burden on her conscience, still less

could she die with it there ; she dared not meet her husband's anger when he learnt the truth, but he should know it all when she was lying cold and lifeless in her grave.

He should know too that she loved him; she would humble herself to confess that which to her nature was the more humiliating confession of the two, because she knew her love was not returned.

About four o'clock a telegram was brought to Joy, who had just come in from a walk with The Captain. Amy was in such feverish haste to know what news it contained, that she longed to snatch it from Joy's hands and open it.

Happily for her Joy did not dawdle, but read it at once.

"Capital, mother; it is from Tom ; he is coming down this evening for a few days. I'll go and order the dog-cart and go and meet him ; he will cheer us three women up ; I hate a house without a man in it," said Joy eagerly.

Amy breathed freely once more ; she hated Mr. Selsey at all times, and he was particularly unwelcome just now ; but it was such an intense relief to find the telegram was not from Jersey that she exclaimed involuntarily :

"Oh ! I am so glad."

"So am I, for I feel so nervous ; I seem to have a foreboding that something terrible is going to happen ; I can't shake the feeling off at all. I do wish your father were at home," said Mrs Oxburgh.

"But, mother, you must not give way to such feelings ; I am sure Tom will be very angry when I tell him the horrors you are conjuring up," said Joy.

"I think it is the weather; I feel very nervous too," said Amy.

"I wonder if Tom would mind sleeping in the haunted room. I should sleep better if he would. I am always afraid of burglars when your father is out, and that is the weakest place in the house," said Mrs. Oxburgh.

"I am sure he won't mind ; I'll tell him you wish him to have it out with the burglars before they come to you. Come along, Captain ; we must start. I shall make Green drive ; it is so cold, and he has nothing to do ; may I, Amy ?"

"By all means ; are we to wait tea ?"

"Well, we shall be back by five; do as you like."

Amy decided to wait, and as Mrs. Oxburgh went to sleep soon after Joy started, she sat in the gloaming, trying to decide how she should put an end to herself.

She was sitting in an easy-chair in Mrs. Oxburgh's pretty room ; a large fire piled up with logs was blazing away, lighting the room and wrapping her beautiful face and figure in a soft warm glow, casting quaint shadows across the ceiling as the tongues of flame leaped up.

She thought of the lake in the park, but the very idea of those cold waters this bitter weather made her shiver ; she would never have the courage to jump into that.

There remained poison. She had plenty of laudanum and chloroform in her room, and she could easily send for arsenic or prussic acid on some pretext, but she shrank from poison. She did not know what effects different poisons produced ; she wished to die an easy death, and she did not wish to be disfigured. Some poisons, she knew, were most painful ; people died in agony after taking them ; others caused the body to swell and change colour ; it behoved her to be careful.

"I wish it would snow ; I wish we could have a deep, deep fall of snow ; I love snow, it is so beautiful. Oh ! if it would only snow I should know what to do. I wonder if I were to pray for snow, would it come ? People pray for rain, why not for snow ?"

She had just reached this point in her meditations when the door opened, and Joy and Mr. Selsey came in with the news that it was snowing fast, and they were evidently going to have a deep fall.

"Oh ! how lovely ! I am so glad ; I love snow," exclaimed Amy, jumping up and clapping her hands as she ran to the window to look out.

"Have you had any news since I have been gone ?" asked Joy, thinking from the sudden change in Amy's manner she must have had some good news from her husband.

"No, only I was wishing for snow, and one does not often get one's wishes gratified so quickly," said Amy, who was in extravagantly high spirits all the evening from that time.

She was respited, no news came ; it was too late now for a telegram ; she might live to see another day break, and miserable as she was life was sweet, so she sat up late with Joy and Mr. Selsey playing billiards.

Amy was one of those people who have the knack of pushing disagreeable things away from them when they choose to do so ; and having made up her mind to enjoy her respite, she did so, and was as gay as a lark all the evening, and went to bed and slept soundly all night.

When she looked out of the window in the morning the first thing she saw was a telegraph messenger ploughing his way through the snow, for there had been a deep fall during the night, so deep that the park was entirely covered with a thick white mantle, and the naked trees were so laden with snow that their delicate tracery was quite lost.

The telegram was from Jack to Mrs. Oxburgh.

" Crossing to-day; shall arrive by first train to-morrow."

Nothing more, but Amy read a great deal into it ; the mere fact that the telegram was to her aunt and not to her told her he was angry with her ; and by his not mentioning the cheque she knew he had discovered her guilt.

She could not face him. Nothing should induce her to do so.

In a little more than twenty-four hours he would be back, but he would not find her ; she must *do it* before then.

Oh ! the blessed snow, the beautiful snow ; but for that she might never have had the courage to die by her own hand : courage she called it, cowardice it really was. But to sink to sleep in the soft white beautiful snow, there would be nothing terrible in that, she thought. Death would come softly and gently as she lay cradled in the snow ; he would lay no rude hands on her beauty, the snow would protect that ; and when she was found, even if she lay some days shrouded in the snow, she would be beautiful, and so strong was her vanity that she wished to be beautiful even in death.

Her spirits at breakfast were evidently forced, and it was with difficulty that she crammed any food down. After breakfast she proposed that Mr. Selsey and Joy should go for a walk in the park with her, and snowball each other to keep themselves warm.

On getting out they found the snow had drifted, so while in some places it was only a few inches deep, in others the drifts were ten and twelve feet high.

" There must have been a strong north wind blowing ; you see it is along all the southern walls and slopes that the snow has drifted," said Mr. Selsey.

"Oh! what fun. I expect we shall find the ground at the foot of the south terrace covered almost as high as the terrace itself; when we go back we will look," said Joy, who, pleased to have her brother-in-law with her to tease her, was in better spirits.

The Captain, too, was in wild spirits, dashing madly through the snow, eating it and tossing it up in the air, sometimes disappearing beneath it.

The south terrace was a grassy bank with gravel walks and flower beds cut out on it, which ran along the south side of the house, sloping suddenly down into the park by a steep incline.

On their return they found the snow had drifted, so that it was impossible to tell where the terrace ended; it was quite twelve feet deep here, for the terrace was fully that above the park on this side of the house; it was one great bed of snow, with snow wreaths on the top.

"That will do for me; I could not have hit on a better place; it is near the house, so I shan't have far to walk, and the snow is so deep, there will be no escape when once I fall into it," thought Amy as they stood below looking up at the driven snow.

"Look at the snow wreaths," said Joy.

"It looks like a great grave," said Mr. Selsey.

"So it is," thought Amy, but she was silent.

Mrs. Oxburgh's room looked on to this terrace, and it was Perriam's pride always to have the beds gay with flowers; even now they were full of crocuses and snowdrops, and as soon as they were over, the beds would be filled with hyacinths and tulips. This south terrace was the prettiest part of the garden, and was the favourite walk in winter with every one.

"Take care the children don't go on the terrace to-day, Joy; it is very dangerous. Gladys might slip into the drift in a moment," said Mr. Selsey.

"I'll see to that," said Amy, and she ran indoors to caution Rose to avoid the south terrace until the snow was gone.

"They will be less likely to find me if the terrace walk is pronounced dangerous, so I'll foster that notion," said Amy to herself.

"What spirits Mrs. Lockwood is in to-day. Is it because her husband is coming home to-morrow?" said Mr. Selsey to Joy when Amy left them.

"I suppose it is ; she has been very much depressed till the snow came. Perhaps it is your presence ; you know she always was one of your ardent admirers," said Joy.

"I know I don't reciprocate the feeling ; but she is looking very pretty to-day, I must say."

"Yes, she is prettier than ever, I think ; marriage suits her. Her face used to want expression, if there was a fault in it ; now she seems to have grown a soul, if you know what I mean," said Joy.

'No, I do not, Joy ; your language is too abstruse ; kindly put it less scientifically if you can."

Joy answered by sending a snowball at her brother-in-law so scientifically that it knocked off his hat.

After luncheon nothing would suit Mrs. Lockwood but a sleighing expedition, so the sledge was ordered out, and the trio went for a drive, and to all appearances Amy was the gayest of the party as they dashed through the snow, which flew up and sprinkled them ; but in reality Mr. Selsey was the only one who enjoyed it, and to him after work in the London slums it was a real treat.

Joy was not happy ; she was daily coming to the conclusion she had made a mistake in engaging herself to Major Graham, and the problem she set herself in all her waking moments to solve was how to extricate herself honourably from it.

Amy, in spite of her merry laugh, was miserable ; every minute the thought that this was her last day would force itself on her, and yet terrible as that was, the thought of meeting her husband to-morrow was still more terrible ; anything, anything, death itself, rather than that.

"Are the nights moonlight now ?" she asked, as the sun set in a ruddy glare over a white world.

"Yes, there is a full moon to-night," said Mr. Selsey.

"That is all right. I am glad," said Amy.

"Why, what a devoted wife you are, Mrs. Lockwood. Are you mentally reaching Southampton with your husband in the moonlight ?" said Mr. Selsey, imagining Amy's anxiety about the moon had prompted the remark.

But though in truth she was following Jack in spirit all that day, it was herself she was thinking of when she asked about the moon. She hated darkness ; she would not dare to leave the

house all alone in the dark, she thought ; but she would not be afraid to leave the world all alone in the bright moonlight.

She was a thorough coward ; she did not fear the real danger, death ; it was the little details, the cold walk, the darkness, the dread of disfigurement that terrified her. Death, the king of terrors, before whom the bravest men have paled, had no terror for her ; she had not imagination enough to conceive what death must be ; all she could realize was the darkness, the wet snow, the cold night. The darkness of death, the plunge into eternity, the unknown future, all this was quite beyond her ken.

So she was glad to learn the night would be moonlight ; she hoped there would be a frost, she did not want to get wet feet ; she wished to do the thing comfortably ; she shrank from all physical discomfort even when contemplating self-destruction. And she did not wish to think about the awful deed she meant to do. So with her usual power of avoiding unpleasant thoughts, she pushed it from her, and gave herself to enjoying the quick motion of the sledge as they drove through the frosty air.

"We might drive down in the sledge to-morrow to meet father and Mr. Lockwood, Amy, if you like," said Joy as they reached the house on their return.

"By all means," said Amy aloud, adding inwardly, "You can ; I shall be dead and buried in the snow." And then, as she sat over her bedroom fire wrapped in a tea-gown when they got indoors, she wondered, would Jack care for her then when she was gone ? Would he wish her back ?

"What our contempts do hurl from us,
We wish it ours again."

Would he do so ?

Men always care most for that which they cannot have ; would he care for her then ? Or would he console himself with Joy ?

If any thought could have hindered Amy from carrying out her wicked intention, the thought of her rival stepping into her place would have done so ; she would like to live to spite Joy. But no, Jack would scorn her living when he knew her guilt ; he would not scorn her dead, and she could not bear his scorn.

They went to bed early that night ; Mr. Selsey and Joy were sleepy, after being out so long in the cold air, and Amy went up to her room, though she had no intention of going to bed.

Her room was next door to Mrs. Oxburgh's and looked on to the south terrace, and the first thing she did on reaching it was to open the curtains and see if the moon were up. Yes, Mr. Selsey was quite right, it was moonlight; the full moon shone out pure and bright from a cloudless sky; the snow reflected its light till the night was almost as light as the day.

She dropped the heavy curtains and with a shiver turned to the fire and warmed herself; then a sudden inspiration seized her, and picking up a costly Indian shawl, she wrapped it round her and stole across the landing to another side of the house, where slept Rose and the children.

Rose was not yet gone to bed, but she was surprised to see her mistress, who never visited her children at this hour unless they were ill.

"Are the children all right, Rose?" asked Mrs. Lockwood as she bent over Gladys's crib and gently kissed the sleeping child.

Then she moved to the boy's crib, and laid her beautiful cheek on his chubby one, and the child's fingers opened and closed over one of hers; and as Rose listened she could almost have sworn she heard a stifled sob, as at last the mother raised herself and gently extricated her finger from the soft dimpled little hand, and then swept hastily from the room.

Rose moved quickly to the crib, and bending over saw the pillow was wet with tears, and thinking that wonders will never cease, she went to bed herself to dream of her beautiful mistress as she stood bending over her boy.

Amy, on returning to her room, threw off the shawl, and sitting down by the fire, opened her writing desk and began to write to her husband. For an hour she sat and wrote almost without a pause, and then she folded and sealed her letter and left it on the table.

Then she moved to the looking-glass and took a long, long look at the beautiful face she loved so dearly; her cheeks were flushed, her eyes bright with excitement. Yes, she was beautiful; her looking-glass could not deceive her about that. She was dressed in a black velvet dress, open in front, showing her snow-white neck, and her arms were bare from the elbow; some strings of pearls were twisted round her throat and wrists, but she wore no other ornaments.

As she looked at her beautiful face, her faultless features now aglow with the passion which had stirred her soul to write the letter she had just finished, the clock on the stairs struck twelve.

"Midnight. I must go. To-day he will be here."

And then she bent forward and kissed the reflection of her own lips in the glass ; she loved herself very dearly.

The thought struck her as she turned away, and with a little bitter laugh she muttered half aloud :

"Fool ! fool ! fool ! Why do I love him more ?"

She did, or she would never have done the deed she was bent on doing ; she loved him so, she dared not face his anger ; she could not live without the love she knew she now could never win.

She caught up the shawl she had cast aside ; a white one embroidered with gold, and she remembered it was the one she and Joy had used for a pall long years ago when they tried to frighten Mr. Selsey by carrying Felix's coffin-like case past his window.

"It will do for a real pall now ; they can cover me with it when they find me," thought Amy as she wound it artistically round her head and shoulders, and with a candle in one hand and the train of her dress in the other, she crept from her room downstairs to the side door near Mr. Selsey's room.

This was the nearest to the south terrace, and she did not want to walk far through the cold snow in her thin evening shoes.

The house was silent as the grave ; not a sound except the ticking of a clock and the creaking of the old oak stairs disturbed the silence of the night. She listened outside Mr. Selsey's door, and his regular breathing told her he slept, and she knew he was a sound sleeper. Then she opened the side-door noiselessly, and with a shiver as the cold air met her, closed it gently without latching it behind her, and stepped out on to the snow, which cracked crisply under her feet, for it was freezing slightly.

Just here the snow was only a few inches deep, and the frost was not hard enough to prevent her from leaving her footprints, lightly as she trod, in the snow. She walked carefully, for she was afraid of falling, past Mr. Selsey's room and the conservatory, which were on the west side of the house, and then she came to

the south terrace; she walked on to the other end of the terrace, for it was there the bank was steepest, and then she paused and shivered not so much with cold as with fear. She had been walking near the house, keeping to the gravel path till now. Now she paused, and, standing with her back to the house, looked across the white world she was preparing to leave.

Above was the cloudless moonlit sky, below the snow-wrapt earth, glistening silvery white in the frosty air. Far as her eye could reach the white snow lay; the snow-laden trees looked like gigantic weird figures and cast quaint ghostly shadows over the white ground.

How bleak and cold and repellent it looked, for snow, though beautiful, is very cruel.

Her plan was to run forwards across Perriam's crocus beds till she reached the edge of the terrace, which just here sloped precipitately down to the park-land below. Once her feet left the solid earth she would, she knew, sink down into the drift, there ten or twelve feet deep: a soft white couch enough, but one from which she would never rise again alive. Snow is very deceptive; well as she knew the terrace she could not tell where it ended and the drift began. She tried to calculate how long it would take, how many seconds to run into the drift from the place where she stood. Half a minute? Fifty seconds? Perhaps; she could not tell exactly.

Then she made a feint at starting, but something held her back.

What was that something?

Was it fear of death?

Was it only a dread of wetting those delicate feet or losing a pretty shoe in the snow?

Both perhaps.

She made another attempt, and again something held her back.

Was it her guardian angel? Was he folding his white wings round her to hold her back from death and the judgment to come? Something wet touched her cheek; she brushed it away, thinking it was a stray flake of snow. Perhaps it was; perhaps it was the tear of that heart-broken angel whose task was so nearly over; who so soon must wing his flight to the great white

throne, and sorrowfully report he had lost the soul he had watched over from her baptism.

Amy dashed away the tear, and drawing her velvet skirt closer round her, broke from beneath the shelter of those invisible unresisting wings and rushed madly across the snow into eternity.

A few seconds only brought her to the drift, and then in a cloud of snow she disappeared with one cry for mercy, which the sorrowing angel carried with him to the courts of heaven.

(To be continued.)

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A Third Person.

By B. M. CROKER,

Author of "PROPER PRIDE," "DIANA BARRINGTON," "TWO MASTERS,"
"INTERFERENCE," "A FAMILY LIKENESS," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXVII.

CLARA'S GOOD NEWS.

THE winter at Morpington was unusually severe, and, as the spring advanced, blighting east winds carried off a number of victims. Mrs. Yaldwin failed rapidly, and early in May she died, and had a great funeral. Another member of the family died not long afterwards, and had no grand obsequies—merely a hole dug under a dwarf palm by a couple of soldiers, and a service read over him by a round-faced subaltern. Such, we have already learnt, was the end of Hubert Yaldwin, the family "ne'er-do-well." Had he lived and survived his grandmother, he would have been Hubert the well-to-do, for Mrs. Yaldwin's fortune had been strictly settled on her son and his children, and Rose was now the heiress of a comfortable sum that brought her in five hundred a year. Poor Rose was in great woe. She missed the constant occupation her grandmother's illness had entailed, and she was heart-broken about Hubert. There had been nothing to soften the blow—no preparation, no farewell letter, no relics—merely a few curt lines from some officer to her grandfather, informing him of the fact, and also that Mr. H. Yaldwin owed him (Lieutenant Jones) four hundred rupees (bill enclosed), and that as he was hard up, he would be obliged if the general would settle it at his earliest convenience. Two months later, a letter arrived from Roger Hope. It was also addressed to the general, and written in a very shaky hand, giving full details of Hubert's illness, and mentioning that the writer him-

self was still a sufferer from the same description of fever that had carried off so many lives in Upper Burmah.

Mrs. Randall arrived at No. 13 not long after her mother's death—a stern-faced, bustling matron, with an eagle eye and hooked nose. She swooped down on all Mrs. Yaldwin's lace, furs and jewellery, severely cross-examined Rose as to domestic expenditure and the condition of her father's health, and departed with a large amount of spoil, leaving her niece with the reins in her hands—mistress of the house. Rose was now twenty ; she had money of her own (and trustees) and considerable influence with the general. He was grateful for her unwearied attendance on the old lady, and allowed her far more liberty than of old. He bought her a piano, took her up to London for ten days, and, in the course of the autumn, consented to her paying a visit to her mother's people. Rose was absent for three delightful months, and whilst with her aunt and cousins, she learnt to ride, to play tennis, to talk like other girls—and to look happy.

Meanwhile, the general was left alone—dangerously alone. Of course, he had his club, his vestry meetings and his stamps ; but, although he would not confess it even to himself, he was lonely, and he often dropped in next door and stayed for an hour. These visits were graciously returned by Mrs. Skyler ; at first on pretence of consulting him on some small matter, or to give him a little help in housekeeping, but latterly without any excuse at all, and the general gradually developed the habit of calling daily to take her for a walk.

Of late, Mrs. Skyler's creditors had been unpleasantly pressing. Her attention was repeatedly directed to the amount of her account, and a cheque in course of post requested. There had been a lamentable falling off in invitations to visit her friends. Her mother seemed more partial to Annie than formerly, and took her side in family debates. She was not liberal in opening her purse strings, and giving her sweet, coaxing, flattering daughter a nice cheque, and Clara feared that there was truth in the whisper, that eccentric Mrs. Baggot secretly spent a large portion of her income on charity—odd charities, the objects of which were ferreted out by herself and Wickes. Struggling families, desolate widows, and even the lower animals, miserable old horses and stray dogs, felt the benefit of her money ; but then she could

not, as she said to herself, burn the candle at both ends—assist her poor neighbours and pay Clara's debts. In Clara's opinion, her mother's charity should begin and end at home, and her first duty was to her own flesh and blood. During the summer, to the amazement of her friends, Mrs. Skyler exhibited a sudden passion for foreign stamps, and actually began to make a collection in a volume of expressive dimensions. The general proved an ardent instructor, presented her with duplicates and gave her every encouragement and assistance. She invariably took every new addition in to the well-known study, to be examined, classified, and valued, and could soon discuss stamps as seriously and as coherently as the veteran himself.

As she pored over a rare specimen, microscope in hand (never had any one treated his collection so sympathetically), little did the general guess her thoughts, or that, as she was scrutinizing a rare American local, with the microscope to her eye, she was saying :

"I shall take precious good care there is none of this nonsense afterwards" (*afterwards!* What did she mean?); and that as she reverently turned over the pages of his best portfolio, she was secretly appraising its contents, and wondering how much they would fetch? and where was the best market for this folly!

Leach viewed the comings and goings of "the squint-eyed widow," as he irreverently termed her, with strong disfavour, and he delivered his mind somewhat in this fashion to another army pensioner :

"If he does not look out she will eat him up—body, bones and feathers—just as that brute of a white cat of hers, ate the cook's canary. It's a pity Miss Rose is from home, not that *she* is able to stand against her; she can't shut a door or open it as she likes," he added darkly. "She's the devil, and if she comes here Jeremiah Leach takes his discharge."

Of course, the people in Morpington could discuss their neighbours as freely as the inhabitants of other towns, and it was generally agreed that "either of the widows at No. 15 would marry the general if he asked her." Such a preposterous idea never dawned upon that gentleman for months—not until Mrs. Skyler herself insidiously introduced it to him, and left it to make itself at home in his mind.

He had always admired her. She was smart-looking, appre-

ciative and pretty ; she talked to him constantly of India, and of old times, and led him on to fight his battles over again, as they paced through country lanes or up and down the Mall ; and as they conversed, his bosom swelled, and his step became as elastic as it had been twenty years ago. Mrs. Skyler could talk as well as listen, and made her companion the recipient of the tale of her woes, and the somewhat complicated sorrows of her heart. Her mother was a dear, and she adored her, but she was really too unconventional at times, and she feared that she would be obliged to look out for a little place of her own. Annie was so frightfully prim and old-maidish, she actually covered up her cock canary when he was taking his bath ! and she was so depressingly matter-of-fact, and punctual, and fussy. Of course, only to the general, would she confide all this—but somehow she felt that she could open her mind more freely to *him*, than to any one else in the whole world.

The guileless warrior was deeply flattered and impressed, and then the fair lady further proceeded to confide to him, how lonely she felt, how solitary her heart was, how she craved for sympathy and love, how wretched her first marriage had been—a match of her mother's making—she and her husband had been totally unsuited to one another, and she had been miserable—of course the dear general would never breathe this—her husband had been a hard, selfish man, wrapped up in himself and his work ; he had never understood her or known her real character, not to the day of his death ! And since then, she had never listened to another suitor—though persecuted with attentions : Roger, for instance had been *too* ridiculous.

* * * * *

When Rose returned home, she was much surprised to see an extraordinary change in her grandfather ; he had become much more juvenile in manner and appearance, he was particular about the fit of his gloves and his coats, he had reduced the crape on his hat by one half, and he called Mrs. Skyler by her Christian name ! The drawing-room furniture had been counter-marched, and covered with pretty cretonne ; a dreadful white marble chiffonier, resembling an obituary monument—to which Mrs. Yaldwin had never dared to object—was gone, and in its place there was a fashionable standard lamp and a bamboo screen.

Who has done all this?" thought Rose, as she gazed around. Aloud she exclaimed, "How nice it looks."

"Yes; Clara came in one day—she thinks it is such affectation my not calling her Clara—and said we should move with the times, and I placed myself entirely in her hands, and she arranged it just as you see."

Rose saw other things also; she saw that Mrs. Skyler was a daily visitor on some pretext about her stamp collection. She generally joined them in their walks and remained to tea. Rose found herself powerless to keep the enemy at bay, or the fascinating widow from within her gates. Mrs. Skyler was a clever woman, and equally well equipped for holding or storming a fortress; push and cajolery were now her most effective missiles. The general was provokingly long in surrendering, but the prize was worth some trouble. In justice to herself, Clara had made inquiries. General Yaldwin, C.B., had over three thousand a year; also he was an erect and well-preserved man, a distinguished officer; there was nothing objectionable about him but his temper, and that—would be kept in proper check. Whilst Rose was at home the investing force made little progress; she dutifully walked with her grandfather, talked to him and read to him for hours; she eagerly devoured all Indian army news, and especially noted intelligence under the head of "Upper Burmah," but any items she gleaned she kept to herself; it would never do, to appear to know more about a certain person, than his own people.

"Roger is a wretched scribe," said Annie; "he has only written once, but you have seen the splendid silver bowls he sent mother?"

"And you would rather have them than letters?"

"Well, yes; since you put it in that way, I would," replied practical Annie. "They are quite the making of our dinner table."

Late the following spring, Rose paid another visit to her relations the Standishes, and the post of companion to the Companion of the Bath was once more assumed by Mrs. Skyler. They took long walks into the country—to hear the birds sing, averred the lady—and as they rested one day under a hawthorn tree, Mrs. Skyler suddenly brought her heavy field guns into action.

"Alas! dear friend," she said, laying her pretty hand lightly on his, "I am afraid that this must be our last walk."

"Why, what do you mean?" he asked.

"I am really ashamed to tell you"—modestly averting her face—"people have been so unkind, so wicked, talking about us; it is too—too cruel."

"Let them talk," he blustered in his most ferocious manner; "a pack of gossiping old cats."

(No, no, dear old gentleman; you are not going to escape thus.)

"But I cannot afford to let them talk," urged Clara, affecting an agitated voice and breathing in short sniffs. "I am a young woman, and I have always been most circumspect. I *did* think that this delightful friendship might have been allowed me; but no, I must resign a companionship"—sniff—"which has been an oasis in my life"—sniff. "Dear general, we must see very little of one another in future," and she began to cry.

In the spring an old man's fancy sometimes turns to thoughts of love. When General Yaldwin and Mrs. Skyler rose from that bench, they were solemnly pledged to be man and wife.

As they strolled slowly homewards, arm in arm, she said: "And what about Rose? I suppose she will remain in Eastshire? A girl with money can always find a home."

"Yes, and Rose is a good honourable girl, brave and staunch. She would have made a fine officer; the spirit of a lion—no cant, no twaddle—but, between you and me, she has a temper."

"Takes after some one I know," pressing his arm affectionately, "and I must say I like it."

The general stared (as well he might), but he believed every word his enchanting companion uttered; he was a proud and happy man, as they walked homewards, discussing plans as eagerly as if they were in their teens. Clara put forward her ideas so promptly and so clearly, that an ill-natured listener might have suggested that these were well-matured, carefully-considered schemes (which they were). Her companion agreed to all her suggestions, and was as proud and radiant as a boy of twenty. He did not notice Leach's interrogative gaze, nor take to himself the minar's shrill cry of "*Idiot!*" the instant he set foot in the hall.

"Mother," said Mrs. Skyler as she entered the boudoir and

stood in the middle of the room, slowly removing her boa, "I have a piece of good news for you."

"Have you, my dear."

"Yes, you lucky woman, you are about to get me off your hands for a second time. I am going to marry General Yaldwin."

"Nonsense, Clara—you are not in earnest."

"Never was more so. He proposed for me this afternoon, and I said yes."

"But he is more than thirty years your senior. Let me see, you are——"

"Never mind my age, mother," she interrupted impatiently. "I am quite prepared to be an old man's darling; he is tremendously fond of me, quite infatuated, poor dear, and he told me that he had seventy thousand pounds in the funds—a thousand for every year of his life—besides house property. Of course some of this goes to his odious daughter and some to Rose; but he can make capital settlements. Annie," to her sister, who had just joined them, looking blue with cold and somewhat cross, "I have found a use for General Yaldwin after all. I am going to marry him?"

"Are you?" An expressive pause, and then she said with unexpected heartiness, "Well, I am very glad to hear it."

"It will be nice to have you next door, Clara," observed Mrs. Baggot, "and, indeed, latterly you have been as much there, as at home."

"Oh, I don't know about next door! Morpington is such a stagnant hole; society is so ancient; I would like to move and get among a less antediluvian set."

"And pray what will you do with the general, my dear?"

"Oh, I shall smarten him up; he does not look more than sixty at a distance; I shall take great care of him, and diet him and coddle him, and do my best to lengthen out his days."

"I am certain you will, my love," rejoined her mother, "for no doubt you are aware that a thousand a year dies with him."

"And when is it to be?" asked Annie with unusual eagerness.

"Oh, very soon, *he* says, but I say not for two months. There is my *trousseau*——"

"Yes," assented her sister, and then added, with a glance of daring significance, "And *now* you will be able to pay Cérise."

Next morning Clara's suitor arrived, bouquet in hand ; he enjoyed a long *tête-à-tête* with his intended, and a conference with Mrs. Baggot, and he remained to lunch. Every day he now brought a bouquet and stayed to lunch. He loaded his prize with presents, he purchased her a superb ring, and three diamond stars and a flight of brilliant swallows, and openly regretted that he had allowed Jane to carry off her mother's furs and jewels. He was persuaded by a knowing acquaintance, to invest in a Stanhope phaeton and pair of steppers, in which turn-out he daily drove his bride-elect in triumph. What a contrast she afforded to poor old Mrs. Yaldwin, with her ear-trumpet and her bath chair ; he himself was changed. Would his former wife have recognized him in these white waistcoats, and with flowers in his button hole ? The general felt as if he was a young man, and had taken a new lease of life, as he bowled up and down the Mall with his divinity beside him.

But every one was not as well pleased as the happy pair. Some said, "The old lady is barely dead a year ;" others, that "it was the general who had caught a Tartar *this* time ;" others, that "there was no fool like an old one."

What a mercy it is that we cannot hear what people say of us behind our backs.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

FELLOW-TRAVELLERS.

THE malarial fever clings with deadly tenacity to its victims. It may appear to have been shaken off, but it returns only too faithfully, and, after eighteen months' foreign service, Roger Hope was invalided home. It was August when he arrived, and London was almost as hot as Allahabad, with a glaring blue sky, burning pavements and dusty trees. As he stood looking into a print shop in Piccadilly, a face among the pictures, vividly recalled Rose Yaldwin. As he gazed he made a sudden resolution. He would run down to Morpington the next day, and see how the land lay ? There was nothing like being on the spot—though he had gained little the last time he was there.

The morning express started at a very early hour, and Roger, having despatched a wire to his aunt, travelled by a later and slower train, which was laden with whole families *en route* to the

sea-side or the hay-fields. In his carriage, there was an elderly lady with a poodle (smuggled), who, at each station, put her head out of the window and eagerly inquired for her maid.

"Horrid old snob," thought Roger, as she trampled on his feet for the fourth time. "If this goes on, I shall pretend I have a valet, and stamp on *her* toes."

At one station, he noticed a landau and handsome pair of bays, who were tossing their heads above the white palings, and on the platform a rather interesting group, possibly the owners of the turn-out—a tall, majestic matron, two pretty girls, and a young man in knickerbockers. They had evidently come to speed a young lady, in half-mourning, who was standing with her back to him, and presumably coming into his carriage, for the door was flung open by a porter, who received from the hands of the footman, a remarkably neat dressing bag, a plaid and a parasol. They were placed in the rack, above the opposite seat, and Roger surveyed them approvingly. He liked to see women travelling with parcels trim and few. He almost fancied that he could tell a woman's character from her luggage. What a contrast was here, to some of his recent fellow-passengers *vid* Brindisi. An Indian mem sahib, with her boxes, tiffin basket, roll of bedding, parrots, ayah, infant and feeding-bottles. One unhappy man had assured him, that his wife and daughter had nine-and-forty boxes and parcels between them. But it was manifestly unfair, to compare the baggage of these ladies, who came from a far country, to that of a girl who was probably going a few stations down the line. Meanwhile, the leave-takings were in progress; the girls hugged the traveller and said:

"Now, be sure you write to-morrow, and tell us if you have any adventures—and come back soon."

The young man permitted his blue eyes, to say unutterable things, and held her hand for an unnecessary length of time. She turned at last, in answer to an imperative, "Take your seats, please," and got in. Yes, it was as he had half expected—it was Rose Yaldwin. In one glance he recognized her, though she was now leaning forward and nodding out of the window, as the train slowly left the platform. A different Rose. Even his unaccustomed eye, noted the elegance of her travelling dress, the perfect fit of her dainty glove. As she drew back at last, with a happy little sigh, her eyes met his.

"You have not forgotten me, I trust, Miss Yaldwin?" he said.

Miss Yaldwin surveyed him gravely, and her face became a shade paler as she said:

"No, Captain Hope. I have not quite such a short memory, but—I never expected to see you. I thought you were in India, or rather Burmah."

"Yes," he said to himself bitterly, "fellows who once go to India are always supposed to stay there. It's a convenient limbo for inconvenient people," but aloud:

"No. I am home again, you see, like a bad penny."

"I've been away from Morpington for some time, and not heard any news. Annie never writes. I believe it is a family failing," she added with a smile.

"Well, I'm no great correspondent, I must confess."

"Only that it is rather soon, I would suppose that you were coming down to the wedding."

"A wedding!" he repeated. "I have not heard of any. Who is going to be married?" and he looked at her keenly.

"I am sure you will never guess."

"Who is it, then? Any one I know?"

"Grandpapa."

"Do you mean your grandfather?" he asked, thoroughly astonished.

"Yes; and he is going to marry your cousin."

"Not Annie!"

"No. Mrs. Skyler is to be my new grandmamma."

"Well"—after a long pause—"I suppose life wouldn't be worth living, without its surprises."

"You may be amazed, but Morpington is not. In fact, the wise people there have seen it coming for a long time, and I really think they will suit one another rather well."

"Indeed," returned Captain Hope dryly, "I should not have supposed it. Then I gather that the alliance between No. 13 and No. 15 has your sanction."

"My sanction was not asked, but it is accorded. Clara—I am not to call her grandmamma—has wonderful influence with grandpapa. Of course, he is much older than she is, but he is marvellously active for his age, and the engagement has taken years off his life."

"I can understand him right enough—but her?"

"Oh"—nodding her head—"she will have a home of her own; she will be very well off. She likes grandpapa, and she will get her own way."

"You amaze me more and more. I must honestly allow that this is the last thing I expected to hear, and you—are you to make a third in the *ménage*?"

"No. Of course I must look out for another home. That was my aunt, Mrs. Standish, who saw me off. My aunt and cousins, they wish me to live with them, but I would rather have a little place of my own close by, with a pretty garden and a pony-cart and half-a-dozen fox-terriers."

"No other society but the fox-terriers?"

"I do not see why I may not live by myself; I am past twenty-one, and my aunt says I must have a companion, if I won't live with her—a nice, pleasant middle-aged lady."

"And no doubt it will be quite a temporary arrangement," remarked Captain Hope significantly; he was furiously jealous of the blue-eyed cousin, who had bidden her a lingering adieu.

This shy wild rose, that had blushed unseen, was now an exquisite garden flower, and a young woman who had a fortune in her pocket, as well as in her face, and with all the *aplomb* and self-possession of a beauty and an heiress. This was not the same Rose, who had been snubbed and silenced, who had worn shabby clothes, and poured out her heart to him that September night, as they tramped up and down the Mall in company; he wondered if she remembered. On the spur of the moment, he spoke.

"Remember! Shall I ever forget it?" she responded with deepening colour. "What a wild, undisciplined creature I was in those days. Only for you, I should be starving now in some garret in Paris."

"Your grandfather would never have forgiven you."

"Never; and it is time for me to inquire for Jacky."

"Jacky is well. I could not get a passage for him at the last moment, when I was going out, and so I left him with my people. He is devoted to my mother, and I don't suppose he will be at all pleased to come back to me; he is a fat elderly gentleman by all accounts. And now, Miss Yaldwin, it is time for *me* to ask you a question. How was it that you broke your promise, and never came to that ball?"

"Oh! surely Annie told you? But possibly you have forgotten."

"It would be impossible for me to forget what I have never heard. For months after I went out my letters were lost. My regiment was on the march down country, and no doubt some of my correspondence, is still laying under layers of dust in little way-side post offices. Other letters were scattered to the winds by Burmese dacoits. Only circulars and bills seem to bear a charmed life. Why did you not turn up that night? What was the reason?"

"I fully intended to go, but grandpapa fell asleep after dinner, and I dared not awake him, and there I sat in my ball dress waiting, and watching until the clock struck twelve."

"Whilst I was waiting and watching at the ball-room door. You don't mean seriously, that you were *afraid* to wake him?"

"It is perfectly true," she answered calmly. "Do you remember the story of Wallenstein, how one of his chamberlains awoke him without orders, and was consequently hanged? Grandpapa was always my Wallenstein."

"I feel perfectly confident, that Clara will have none of your scruples about rousing him," said Hope with emphasis. "And were you disappointed?"

"Of course I was. Did you not know, that it was my first ball?"

As she uttered this reply, she never changed colour, she looked him frankly in the face and smiled. She had forgotten, and why not? And this debonair, blue-eyed cousin, was everything now. There was a silence for some moments, during which time the old lady with the poodle surveyed them with glances of acrimonious disapproval. *What* were girls coming to, chattering away in this style to complete strangers? She was greatly scandalized. This young woman had never stopped talking to the man opposite to her, since she got into the carriage; and he looked like an officer too. It would never surprise her, if they both began to smoke. Ah! they were beginning to get confidential, to whisper.

"I saw your letter to grandpapa," said Rose in a lower voice. "I am glad"—and she checked back two tears—"that you were with him."

"Yes," he returned in the same low key, "I am glad too. I

could not do much, but I could not have done more, if he had been my brother."

"You will tell me everything about him another time."

"Yes, another time." For they were at a station, and their companion once more had arisen, and pulled up the window, calling shrilly to every porter: "Look here, my good man will you send me my maid?"

"I have never thanked you for the lovely bouquet you sent me," said Rose in an audible voice when the train was once more in motion. "I sent you my thanks through Annie."

"Oh?" he replied rather stiffly, "I am glad you liked it."

"It was exquisite. I kept it in water for ages."

Captain Hope looked at her curiously and said:

"My offering was extremely honoured."

Why did he speak in such an odd, sarcastic way? She was puzzled to understand this change in his manner.

"You should see the bouquets that grandpapa carries in to Clara every day," she continued gaily.

"Does he, indeed; and I suppose they are not composed of evergreens, and the sere and yellow leaf? What have the pair in common? I have been racking my brains, to try and think what can have drawn them together?"

"I can relieve your brains at once," said Rose with a merry smile; "they were drawn together, by a mutual taste for foreign stamps."

Hope stared for a second in blank incredulity, and then gave way to a shout of laughter.

So Clara had taken a leaf out of *his* book—sly Clara. And the train slackened and slackened, and shot into Morpington station.

"There is grandpapa," cried Rose, nodding to a very spruce elderly gentleman on the platform.

At first Roger failed to recognize him; a tweed suit, a pot hat, spats and a cane, effected a complete transformation, and, yes, he had certainly darkened his moustache.

"Well, Rosie. Hullo, Hope! Glad to see you; I had no idea you were in this train. Heard you were expected at No. 15."

"Yes; I've just run down for a couple of days. All well, I hope?"

"All well; your aunt younger than ever, and mad about golf. Heard of my luck, eh?" surveying him with triumph.

"Yes, Miss Yaldwin told me. I am pleased to hear we are going to be cousins."

"Ha, ha! So we are! Rose, Collins will see to your small things. The fly is here. I did not bring the phaeton, as Clara wants me to take her out this evening."

"And how does the collection prosper, sir?" inquired Hope, as they stood by the open fly.

"Oh, by Jove! haven't you heard? Of course not. Get in! Get in!" excitedly waving him into the fly. "Your trap can follow with your things, and I will tell you all about it. No time like the present."

(The stamps had always been his very good friends, thought Roger. They now procured him a seat opposite Rose Yaldwin.)

"Wapshott is dead," burst out the general, with unaffected callousness. "His collection, of course, was for sale. I went straight to his man of business, the day before the funeral, and said: 'Now, how about those stamps? I suppose you will dispose of them?' 'Yes,' he said, 'if there is any one fool enough to buy.' 'Here you are,' I answered, 'I'm the fool! Name your price.' My dear sir," laying a heavy and impressive hand on Roger's knee, "I could have had the collection for nothing—for a song—but I'm a man of honour, and I would not rob the dead. Barnes is an idiot. He doesn't know a stamp from a crest, and has no idea of the value of them, nor of the enormous interest attached to a collection, and how it brushes up one's geography and history. If he had sent the collection to an expert, as I suggested, he would have been wise. Luckily for me, Wapshott kept his stamps very, very close, and there was no *rush*. Well, I offered Barnes a cheque for three hundred pounds, and he literally jumped at it. I wrote it out then and there, and I took the collection home, on the spot, in a cab. Of course there was a heap of rubbish, lots of reprints and forgeries, but there were gems—gems, sir. I picked out the blue Natal, a very rare Cashmere, a yellow Honolulu—in all, about twenty; and I sold the *leavings* for five hundred pounds. There was a stroke of business! Barnes met me one day and said: 'I thought I'd got the best of *you* over those stamps, but I find that there's more

money in them than I supposed. I am told you cleared hundreds of pounds over the bargain.' 'Yes, I did,' I allowed. I informed him that I had made seven hundred on the business. Was it not splendid?" rubbing his hands with ecstasy. "Here we are," he added; "and you must come in and see the blue Natal this very afternoon. Rose will give you some tea. Eh, Rose?"

"Thank you, general," said Roger, as he alighted; "I shall be delighted. *Au revoir.*"

(To be concluded.)

Some Poetical Landscape Painters.

IN looking over a fine landscape, how infinitely more subtle do its beauties appear if they are viewed in the light of bygone associations, and if it has been the theatre in the distant past of events in which human passions and interests have played their part.

With what additional character are not, for instance, the snow-clad peaks of a mountain range invested, should here and there be discerned on their acclivities the crumbling grass-grown battlements of a mighty stronghold of former times ; or, how much is our interest in the rushing stream enhanced, should its fleeting waters reflect the jagged arches of some ruined viaduct "that has survived the names of those that reared it."

But in thus dwelling upon the effect that past associations and the handiwork of man give to a landscape, it must be admitted that Nature herself often imparts poetry when these are absent.

A sterile plain over whose monotonous uniformity the eye roves without meeting woods or pastures, the glimmer of water, or distant spire, taken in itself may possess character, but hardly beauty. Yet shown as Danby would have painted it, with the last rays of the sun lingering over its vast expanse, its very sterility, and corresponding air of loneliness and *silence*, becomes the chief medium for the sentiment it excites. So, too, the changes of the seasons—the drifting leaves of autumn, or spring kindling into life its domain of bud and flower—all play their part in giving to scenes, however commonplace and prosaic, a touch of sentiment none the less impressive because it is so fleeting.

To represent Nature with brush or pencil in this, its poetical aspect, has ever been the aim of a certain order of painters, and from amongst the many beautiful productions of Gustave Doré, in the field of imaginative landscape illustration, the figure of the "Wandering Jew," as he has portrayed him, urging his dread way in sunshine and shadow, in storm and calm, through scenery whose sublimity borders on the fantastic, rises before us.

The glistening pinnacles of high mountains, alternating with

dark valleys, in whose dim recesses lurk "all unutterable slimy things," by turn overshadow and swallow up his fugitive form ; grotesque faces peer and gibber at him from the gnarled trunks of venerable trees, and his weary steps are mocked by the repose of the dead in village churchyards. Through all this varying landscape, however, the poetic element underlying it is most prominent in the imagery of the past crime of Ahasuerus, that the cunning hand of the artist has interwoven with the scenes through which he passes, and that conveys at once the meaning and the moral of his flight. In the shadow projected by "The Wanderer" on his path ; in the thickets and grasses of the wayside ; looming in the clouds and blended with the waves of the sea, these phantoms of an evil deed are shown remorselessly pursuing him, and only fail to beckon him onwards when he hears the sound of the last trumpet.

But the scope of Doré's pencil is too wide to admit of more than just touching upon in the present paper. Passing over, therefore, the many glimpses of poetical landscape scattered throughout his drawings for Dante's "Inferno" and "Purgatorio," and the "Idylls of the King," we turn to another painter, who with equal originality combined a still more vigorous imagination.

We refer to John Martin, whose works, once enjoying a widespread popularity, are now seldom heard of. This is probably due to the fact that while exciting awe they seldom please, and again, that they abound in technical defects. Diversified are the complaints of critics on this latter and important point.

It has been objected that his colouring is crude, and figures out of all proportion to their surroundings ; that the flashes of lightning with which he illumined the gloom of his skies fall upon buildings unknown in the annals of architecture, and that it would puzzle the profoundest geologist to determine the strata of the rocks and crags of his foregrounds.

Yet with all this do many of his landscapes afford fine examples of true poetic feeling, imbued as they are with a dreamy and peaceful loveliness, drawn oftentimes from the misty perspectives of solemn lakes and rivers lying amidst scenery such as has been imagined by opium eaters in their visions. Of this character is his noble picture of the "Plains of Heaven," that, marred by neither ill-drawn figures nor impossible architecture, calls to mind the eulogy of Lord Lytton, who some-

where writes of his genius as "the divine intoxication of a great soul."

Widely different in composition and feeling are the drawings of Samuel Reade, well known from their reproduction some years ago in the Christmas numbers of the *Illustrated London News*.

None knew better than he how to interpret the sentiment that attaches to things of the past, and that gives to the withered tree, the stagnant pool, or ivy-clad tower, as it were a history of their own.

The most commonplace subjects acquired from his sympathetic handling an air of mystery and romance, whether it be an entrance gate to a park fallen into decay, or a wind-mill stretching its shattered arms athwart the horizon, for each in their several ways seem eloquently to repeat, "I could a tale unfold."

But the dramatic power of his pencil was shown to the best advantage when employed in delineating old moated granges or forsaken manor houses, standing by twilight amid lonely moor or barren uplands.

About them there is no sign of life save where, perchance, a spectral light, feebly gleaming through the emblazoned tracery of an oriel window, serves but to emphasize the prevailing sense of solitude and desertion.

Gloomily they are looking down in the gathering shades of evening over the blackened urns of their moss-grown terraces into the wilderness of their neglected gardens run riot below them, as if brooding over the scenes of joy and revelry, of dancing and merrymaking, that long, long ago echoed and rang within their mouldering walls.

With Francis Danby, whose works were referred to by Thackeray as "morning and evening odes," and pencil eulogized by Disraeli as of "magic" power, this brief paper may fitly end.

Although occasionally painting in the manner of Doré, as shown in his weird picture of the "Upas," or "Poison Tree," surrounded by the bones of slaves sent to gather its gum, and with even the vivid imagination of Martin in the "Opening of the Sixth Seal," it is on his glowing "Sunsets at Sea" that his fame as a poetical painter chiefly rests. Pervaded as they

are with all the sense of solemnity and repose that reigns throughout Nature at close of day, they instil into the mind of the most careless observer something of the feelings of awe and regret with which we watch the sun go down over the illimitable world of waters.

Devoted through life to his art, Danby had as enduring an affection for that upon which all true art is based.

Of this the following passage from one of his letters in Stokes' "Life of Petrie" gives eloquent expression. "Let us exult," he says, "in the confidence that we belong to that class of our fellow-men who, by the elixir you describe, 'the true enjoyment of Nature,' retain the heart of youth though the eye grows dim, the hand tremble, and the hair turn grey."

C. WYNN WILLIAMS.

Such a Popular Girl.

MAY TREMORTAN'S beauty was an open question. Some held that she was altogether too muscular and energetic for a woman ; whilst others contended that her strength and activity were the very ideal of female grace. But upon one point all the critics were agreed. Never was there such a popular girl.

Miss Tremortan's popularity was so general that it was acknowledged even by those who theoretically disapproved of her. For it must be admitted that she was sufficiently modern in her ways to startle such old-fashioned people as were not large-minded enough to make allowances on a liberal scale. But, if an unrestrained devotion to every known form of sport apparently formed the basis of her character, her interests were by no means confined to violent physical exercises. Indeed, the secret of her popularity lay in the universality of her tastes, which brought her into sympathy with so many different classes of people. For the rest, she was an only girl, idolized by her parents, and the constant companion of several good-looking brothers.

Every neighbourhood has its show girl, whose beauty and accomplishments are an article of faith amongst a large circle of friends and acquaintances. Strangers from other counties invariably have an aggravating habit of disparaging these local celebrities, hinting that they are after all very commonplace creatures, who would arouse no enthusiasm in more enlightened spots. Such a criticism stirs up all the latent patriotism within a radius of twenty miles. The daring outsider must either retract at once, or be content to pass as a purblind idiot of defective taste. Since the days when May Tremortan was a handsome child, galloping about the lanes on a rough pony, with two heavy plaits of golden hair hanging down her back, she had been an accepted leader amongst her contemporaries. Her strong will and buoyant spirits carried all before them. Many a girl whose features were intrinsically more beautiful languished unnoticed in the corner of a ball-room, whilst she was

surrounded by a crowd of importunate partners. Observing these things, the fond parents determined to give her every chance, and rousing themselves up, took a town house for the season.

It is the merest truism that many girls who excite well-deserved admiration at country gatherings are altogether overlooked in the magnificent crowd that constitutes a London party. Would such be Miss Tremortan's fate? An anxious neighbourhood held its breath whilst waiting to hear if society at large would confirm its opinion of her merits. May passed through the ordeal with flying colours. If she did not absolutely create a sensation in London (a feat which is reserved for a very small minority), yet she certainly produced a favourable impression on a large number of people. Her individuality appealed to many women, and most men; for within certain limits she preserved all her old characteristics unimpaired by the novelty of her surroundings. It was currently reported that on one occasion she was found personally helping to unharness a fallen cab horse; sitting on its head, according to a report that obtained credence in some quarters. Another story, to which more importance may be attached, was that she persuaded a young man, who was at that time in great request, to throw up a variety of engagements, and spend a long afternoon with her at the Regent's Park gardens, feeding the monkeys on gingerbread nuts. They were seen returning in a hansom, and several matrons felt it their special duty to point out to Miss Tremortan that such indiscretions were not the way to attract eligible young men. She replied cheerfully that eligibility had nothing to do with it; all she required was some one to laugh with her when the monkeys pulled each other's tails. Such frivolity was naturally provocative of intense irritation in her would-be advisers, who henceforth determined that she was unworthy of any serious consideration. May might easily have confounded the wisdom of these good ladies a little later, by accepting the said young man, when he made her a most decorous and formal offer. But she let the opportunity slip, for indeed her interest in him was solely confined to his performances with the gingerbreads.

Miss Tremortan having emerged triumphantly from the critical test of a London season, now reigned as an undisputed authority

at home. Her dress, manners and general deportment were servilely copied by a large group of imitators. If she took a fancy for travelling third-class, or going to garden parties in hobnailed boots, these fashions were speedily adopted by several devoted admirers of her own sex, who failed to perceive that to be unconventional successfully is an inborn gift. A good many girls in that neighbourhood became ridiculous, and not a few rather vulgar, in a vain attempt to copy a model who was never the one nor the other.

When May first left the school-room, she was such a general favourite, that the announcement of her engagement was a matter of almost daily expectation. Neighbours made the time-honoured jokes with her parents on the subject, and they replied with dignified reticence that they should regard such an event as the gravest misfortune that could befall them. As years passed by they gradually varied the form of their reply, alleging half-apologetically that May was so particular it was simply impossible to content her. Rumour said that she had rejected innumerable good offers; and it was so far borne out by facts, that she might certainly have married well at least two or three times, which is more than falls to the lot of most people.

This was the position of things when, one hot summer's afternoon, a large party of young people were assembled on the lawn in front of the Tremortans' house. The group was almost exclusively composed of men in flannels, young, energetic and breathless. Two lots of players had simultaneously deserted the lawn-tennis courts, and unanimously proclaimed a ten minutes' interval for refreshments. They were now extended, in various picturesque attitudes, under the shade of a great oak tree. Miss Tremortan, who had been amongst the most excited of the combatants, was swinging lazily up and down in the hammock with her eyes half closed. She was not in the least disturbed by the noisy, laughing party, for her father and brothers were the most hospitable of men, and all the year round the house was full of their friends.

May had been brought up amongst men, understood them, and was no more embarrassed by their presence than if they had been a party of school-girls.

"When are these drinks coming, I should like to know?" grumbled Dick Tremortan, rolling over like a white log to escape the rays of sun that penetrated here and there through the thick

boughs overhead. "The difficulty of getting anything in this house is really extraordinary—one would think the servants all went to bed for the day."

"Well, they couldn't guess that we should stop play at exactly half-past four. However, I hear the welcome rattle of glasses; they are bringing it out now." May was not weak enough to feel the slightest irritability at her brother's criticisms. From sheer force of habit he made them every afternoon, but they had long since ceased to have any definite meaning. "Now," she continued, swinging herself out of the hammock, "I had better stop those poor old boys before they go further from the house again, or they'll certainly miss the feast!" Putting a silver dog whistle to her lips, she blew such a shrill blast as to effectually check the further progress of her father, who with a couple of elderly friends was just starting off on a fresh round at golf. Filial piety at Croton Grange manifested itself in a somewhat unconventional manner.

"You can put down the tray and get some more chairs," she said to the footman. "Here. Leave the corkscrew. Now, who is for claret cup? Dick, do rouse yourself up and look after people. No, I only want you to pass the glasses; I would rather open the soda water myself, you waste quite half the bottle."

The merry jingling of glasses was accompanied by a never ceasing flow of chaff. These little parties were very noisy informal gatherings. The preponderance of men and the absence of any regular hostess, for Mrs. Tremortan's health seldom permitted of her leaving the house, all contributed to the noisy hilarity of the scene. Certain people, at different times, started the theory that these little parties were rowdy, and in fact not nice—a comprehensive phrase which is useful as leaving a good deal to the imagination. If one inquired into the matter, these critics invariably turned out to be persons whose only experience of the hospitality of Croton Grange was a formal garden party every two or three years. Such people naturally resented the notion of diurnal merriment from which they were excluded. The Tremortans did not take these strictures to heart. As a family they knew what they liked, and did it with admirable unanimity.

"I say, May, it's all very well you shouting at me to make

myself useful. You had better attend to your own manners," cried Dick, when the noise was at its height. "Just look! There's your neighbour dying of drought, and I don't believe you have ever offered him a drop of anything!"

"Oh, I *am* sorry," exclaimed Miss Tremortan penitently. "A nice idea Mr. Fielding will have of our hospitality! It's always the fate of the stranger in a party to be neglected, whilst the others are helping themselves. Now what will you have? Oh, I am so ashamed! They have quite finished the claret cup. Have some whisky and soda? I have been keeping the soda water very cool on the shady side of the tree."

"No, thank you. I don't want any. Please don't trouble about me," muttered the young man, upon whom the attention of the whole party was suddenly concentrated.

"You drink beer, then? No. Perhaps you like cider. We can get it in a moment. Not the least trouble. If I just whistle the servant will come."

"No. Please don't," interrupted Mr. Fielding, with a scarlet face. "The fact is I don't drink any of those things."

"You aren't a teetotaler, are you?" shouted Dick, with a loud laugh at the patent absurdity of such a suggestion.

"Well, I suppose I am." The young man made this admission with so much embarrassment that it was evident he felt to the full how sententious such a statement would sound, uttered in such company. His confusion was infectious. Dick's loud laugh died away suddenly, and an awkward silence fell on the noisy party.

May was the first to rush to the rescue. "Of course! How stupid of me not to have noticed it before! Those idiotic servants haven't brought out any tea to-day," she said impatiently. "They knew I should run indoors to have tea with my mother, so they took upon themselves to dispense with it out here. We really do have a succession of the most idle, incompetent ——"

"Well, who is abusing the servants now?" interrupted Dick, who was full of pleasing little fraternal habits. "You say I grumble at nothing, but I am reasonable compared with you. If they did bring out that tea you talk about, how often would it be touched, I should like to know?"

"Oh, do shut up. I can't stand an argument in this weather," observed Miss Tremortan unceremoniously.

Your sister is quite right. You are a perfect nuisance making such a row. Do finish that peach and get ready to play again," cried a chorus of voices from the recumbent figures on the lawn. In the confusion May had quietly supplied her neighbour with a tumbler of milk and soda, and then in pity for his obvious discomfort paid no further attention to him. But she determined to investigate again, at a more convenient time, this young man with the shy, boyish face, who had struck such a jarring note in the convivial party.

Maurice Fielding was a very recent friend of Dick's; in fact they had met for the first time on the preceding day at a local cricket match. It then transpired that the stranger was staying with his great-uncle, an old General Wood, who lived in an adjoining village. Dick's pity had been readily excited at the idea of what a dull host the gouty old gentleman must make, and he had hospitably pressed the young man to come over to Croton Grange whenever he liked. Now he was half-ashamed of his new importation.

"I am afraid he is rather a fool," he remarked gloomily to May when, after all the guests had dispersed, they were left to collect the tennis balls on the dewy grass.

"Perhaps not," she responded in a hopeful tone. There was something engaging about Maurice's fair open face that inclined her to give him the benefit of the doubt. "You know he really plays tennis well," she continued. "And lots of people don't drink now-a-days."

"All my friends do," said Dick, as if that settled the matter irrevocably. "Besides, I hate people who set themselves up and go in for being peculiar. How could I guess the fellow was a teetotaler? He made me look a perfect ass."

"My dear boy, that would be an impossible feat."

"It's all very well to laugh, but I don't see the joke," answered Dick irritably, his ill temper being in a great measure due to the fact that he was engaged in extracting a tennis ball from the centre of a holly bush. "Blow that ball! I must get it out by daylight," he added presently, giving up the attempt in despair. "And why haven't you loosened that net when you can see it's going to rain to-night, instead of wasting your time defending that silly young idiot?"

May only laughed. Dick's trifling ebullitions of temper were

nothing to her. She called his attention to the fact that she had already picked up most of the balls. Also that Mr. Fielding was his guest, not hers. She concluded her exhortations by pointing out that the dinner bell had rung twice already, and that there were limits to paternal patience.

The following afternoon Miss Tremortan set out to pay a long-neglected call on Mrs. Wood. She found the old lady at home, and was welcomed with so much effusion as to produce a distinct feeling of shame at not being a more frequent visitor.

"It's such a pleasure to see a bright young face and hear a merry voice again," said Mrs. Wood with a stifled sigh. "Since our poor child went back to India we have been a very lonely old couple."

May could not forbear a faint smile as she recalled the pompous, pasty-faced Indian judge, to whom this maternal allusion was made. But, at the same time, her ready sympathies were excited on behalf of the bereaved parent. "Dear Mrs. Wood," she said, "I should come and see you much oftener if I thought you cared about it."

"It's kind of you to say so. And I believe you mean it," replied the old lady, furtively wiping away a tear that always appeared at any reference to her absent son. "And how are your own brothers? Are they all at home?"

"Oh, no; Gilbert is with his regiment in Ireland, and Reggie has gone back to London. Did you hear he had his first brief the other day? We were thinking of putting it in the local papers in case he should never have another ——"

"But, my dear, I always understood he was such a clever young man," interrupted Mrs. Wood in a puzzled voice. "Oh, I see, you were only joking. And how about your youngest brother Dick? He must be almost grown up by this time. What is he doing?"

"Well, he is doing nothing with remarkable success. In fact, my father says he does it so well, it would be a pity to put him to anything else. Seriously, I don't think we could spare him at home, and he is quite of that opinion himself. And now," continued May, "that you have heard all about my young men, I want to hear about yours; the one, I mean, who is staying here."

"Maurice Fielding? Of course. That reminds me I ought to

have sent for him to come and entertain you. He is only reading in the garden."

"Don't do anything of the sort," said May, gently pushing the old lady back into her seat. "How can we talk about him when he is here? Call Mr. Fielding presently, if you like, but let me hear all about him first."

"Well, then," said Mrs. Wood, settling down to the enjoyment of a long gossip, "he's a very peculiar young man."

This was no news to Miss Tremortan. She had suspected as much, or she would not have been paying calls that fine afternoon, thereby incurring the savage reproaches of the disconsolate Dick, who was reduced to cricket with the stable boys in her absence. She pressed her hostess to give more definite information. Unfortunately Mrs. Wood had not the gift of description, and could do little more than reiterate in various forms her former assertion. Seeing this, May fell back upon the interrogation plan, with rather more success.

"Is he a prig?" she demanded.

"No—I don't think that at all. Even the general admits that he is a very modest young man, though he doesn't approve of his notions."

"And what are these notions?" asked the girl eagerly. She had a passion for getting at the root of things, that would not allow her to rest satisfied at this point.

"Why, I mean all these new-fangled ideas about it's being everybody's business to set the world straight, to be sure," replied Mrs. Wood. "We are old-fashioned people, you know, and the general says he can't understand a man of Maurice's age thinking about nothing but housing the poor and abolishing intemperance—not but what it's very bad to meet tipsy men on the road. I thought I should have fainted last Christmas Eve, when one of them shouted after me coming home from church."

"Very alarming," said May. "But what about Mr. Fielding's notions?"

"Well, there's no harm in them, I will say that. And he has a wonderfully persuasive way when he talks, so that one can't resist him. Why, look!" And Mrs. Wood held up a massive piece of knitting. "He has actually started me making these things for the deep-sea fishermen. I told him my sight

wouldn't stand needlework, but he insisted upon my trying. 'Anybody can do that,' he said, 'and you'll find the time pass much more quickly if you are clothing the poor than merely working for your own pleasure.'"

"One always wishes the poor didn't wear such rough materials," said Miss Tremortan flippantly. "My fingers really won't stand it."

"Yet I believe Maurice would talk you over to his way of thinking," said Mrs. Wood; "at least he always does me. But, as the general says, it seems hardly natural for a young man who is well off, and in excellent health, to care about such things; if he was consumptive, or even very poor—ah, now you are laughing. But you know what I mean."

"Perfectly. There is a natural fitness about virtue and misfortune."

"Yes. That's just what I meant. What a clever girl you are, to be sure. But I remember your dear mamma telling me once that you can talk four different languages, so no wonder."

"Well, I can ask for the bread and butter in French," admitted May modestly. "But it doesn't take much to impress my family."

"Oh, I expect you know more than that." Mrs. Wood spoke doubtfully, and for a moment Miss Tremortan anticipated an examination on her capability of asking for various articles of food in different foreign tongues. However, the old lady appeared to change her mind and reverted to the former topic. "I was always fond of Maurice from a child," she continued. "He was the very prettiest baby you ever saw. Just like a cherub, with the same innocent look he has now. I remember strangers used always to mistake him for a girl, he was so lovely. And he has grown up so kind and good. But the general says he is disappointed in him. He doesn't care about all these serious ideas. He likes young men to be full of their hunting and cricket, and not care much about anything else, like your three handsome brothers."

"Yes. They certainly would not incur reproach as being unnaturally serious," laughed May. Soon after, the entrance of a servant with the tea-tray prevented further discussion of the subject.

Miss Tremortan's curiosity was by no means satisfied with what she had heard. Although she did not express her astonishment quite as naively as Mrs. Wood, she shared to the full that good lady's wonder, that any young man who might spend his whole time in enjoyment should take up such a different line. Such a case was outside the limits of her previous experience.

Mr. Fielding came in presently, looking more youthful and ingenuous than ever. He blushed scarlet as he shook hands with the visitor, and then proceeded to hand about tea and cake in the most common-place way imaginable. It was disappointing. May tried to get up a conversation with him, but all such efforts were promptly stifled under Mrs. Wood's ceaseless flow of platitudes. However, she was a young lady of resource, and absolutely unhampered by shyness. So presently, in the most natural and unpremeditated manner, she suggested to Mr. Fielding to walk part of the way home with her.

"Of course, Maurice will be only too delighted," interposed Mrs. Wood. "But surely I saw your carriage?"

"I sent it back with the coachman," replied May quietly. "If Mr. Fielding really does not mind starting directly, I think we had better be off. It is a beautiful walk over the hill, but takes time."

A country walk on a summer day is not a bad opportunity for making friends. Yet for the first mile Miss Tremortan had the conversation all to herself. Her companion would originate nothing, and she had hardly taken all this trouble to hear him shyly acquiesce in her remarks on the weather. Yet it seemed difficult to draw the conversation on to a more personal footing.

"We were talking of you this afternoon," she said at last. "Mrs. Wood has been telling me all about you."

"Has she? Then I'm afraid she talked a lot of nonsense." Mr. Fielding's tone betrayed considerable anxiety.

"Not at all. She told me how you are looking forward to a time when everybody shall become temperate, well-behaved, and generally ornaments to society. I don't think she made it quite clear how this feat was to be accomplished, but perhaps I didn't understand."

"Oh, go on. Did she tell you anything else?"

"Rather. I heard how you converted everybody to your own views, except the general, who it seems is an obdurate sinner. Then I saw with my own eyes the work for the deep-sea fishermen, and was told how you insisted ——"

"Really, my aunt is intolerable," interrupted Mr. Fielding. "What possesses her to bore people by talking about me at all, I can't imagine."

"But indeed it was very interesting."

"It amused you very much, no doubt," he replied with evident annoyance. "After all, if you had seen the frightful woollen antimaccasars she wasted her life in producing before, you would understand how I came to suggest something fresh. Well, did you hear anything more about me?"

"Just a little," said Miss Tremortan demurely, "a few details about your childhood, your cherub expression, and how all your friends mistook you for ——"

"Oh, it's too much," he interrupted; "she makes me appear a perfect fool and a meddling idiot into the bargain. I feel certain that, after all you have heard, you will prefer your own company to mine, so I had better turn back."

"You can't possibly do that," interposed Miss Tremortan hastily; "there's a bull, or a mad dog, or something at the next farm that I never pass by myself."

The young man hesitated, evidently struggling to master his vexation. "If you wish it, of course I will come on," he said stiffly. "But I hate being misrepresented and made to appear ridiculous."

May had no intention of losing the companion who was just becoming amusing. She set to work to smooth down his ruffled susceptibilities. "Please don't take my remarks seriously," she said. "I thought you would understand that I was only joking. Of course we all of us appear rather ridiculous as described by Mrs. Wood. She is kindness itself, but quite one of the friends against whom one prays to be defended. You won't mind my saying so, though she is your great-aunt by marriage. Now I daresay she may have casually mentioned to you that I can talk all the known languages, dance like Taglione, and always kill the fox myself when I go out hunting. Didn't she now?"

"Well, she certainly inferred that your accomplishments were many and varied."

"Don't believe a word of it, then, and I'll do the same about you. Now, having cleared the ground," continued Miss Tremortan, in a voice that had suddenly lost every trace of levity, "will you tell me yourself about your life and objects? I wish to understand the truth about them."

"If you really care to know, of course I will try," he began, looking half-suspiciously at his companion. He was reassured by seeing the sweet serenity of her face, just tinged with expectant attention. "I know it's stupid of me," he went on, "but I can't bear being laughed at. When one is in earnest oneself it seems so incongruous. The cynicism of those who do nothing but reserve the right to criticize is most exasperating."

Miss Tremortan signified assent. She understood what he meant; although living in a circle that took nothing seriously, she had never experienced it herself.

"And now," he went on, "I want to explain about yesterday. It has worried me horribly thinking what a fuss I made—about those wretched drinks, I mean. It was all my fault that there was any awkwardness."

His fair boyish face flushed painfully as he made this admission.

"Oh, we never thought of it again!" said May, rather mendaciously. "Besides no two people have quite the same opinion on that subject, have they?"

"Perhaps not. But for all that I felt priggish and stupid. I know you thought so, although you were too kind to show it. Of course one can't explain one's motives in public, but if you don't mind listening now, I should like you to understand my reasons."

He then briefly told her how his resolution to abstain from every form of drink had originated in the effort to persuade an unfortunate man, who was fast drifting into a confirmed drunkard, to do likewise. Read in the pages of a religious magazine, the story would have been commonplace enough, but coming fresh from the lips of a singularly prepossessing young man, it gave May a strange thrill of subdued excitement.

"Of course I regret it sometimes," he added frankly. "I did yesterday, for instance. But when I think of that poor fellow I am sure I did right. I don't pretend for a moment that there

was no other way of saving him. All I mean is, that no other way was apparent to me. Therefore, I had no choice."

Hitherto, without giving the subject much consideration, Miss Tremortan had hastily concluded that the main object of teetotalers was to pose as being superior to human weaknesses. If Mr. Fielding had only known it, she liked him twenty times better for the embarrassed awkwardness of which he was so ashamed.

"And about the other things I heard," she said gently. "Is it true that you spend your life studying the condition of the poor, and even living amongst them in London?"

Maurice Fielding grew very red. "Well, it is true to a certain extent," he admitted. "And yet if I say that, you will think me much better than I am."

"Oh, I promise not to do that," laughed May. "I will even assume, for the sake of argument, that devoting one's life to the poor is a most subtle form of self-indulgence. I have never been tempted that way myself, but possibly if I were I should fall like you."

"Oh, you would! You would, indeed!" cried the young man, too much in earnest to perceive any absurdity in his appeal. "If you once realized the misery of the masses, you could never rest without making an effort. Even if one would, how can one ignore the suffering millions?"

"I never think about them," said Miss Tremortan simply.

"Ah, that's just it! The selfishness that comes of ignorance! But you must excuse me. I am talking very rudely."

"Say just what you think," interposed the girl. "I shall not be offended by your remarks, and you must try not to be shocked by mine."

"Very well. What I want to make you understand is the all-absorbing sympathy that comes over one at the sight of such a mass of human suffering as exists in our great towns. One could not resist the appeal even if one would. That is why I say there is no virtue in giving oneself up to the cause. Everybody would do it if they grasped the horror of starvation and homelessness. And isn't it curious," continued Maurice, who had now lost all shyness in the interest of his subject, "isn't it perfectly inexplicable, the way people like my uncle refer to the poor in the aggregate, as if there was something criminal

about their discontent? He is very inconsistent too, for though he would like to disperse all meetings of the unemployed at the point of the bayonet, he can never pass a beggar in the road without giving him a shilling."

"It doesn't strike me as so extraordinary," said May. "In fact I think it's a way we all have in the country. But I can fancy that you don't find General Wood's society exactly congenial."

They walked along for some time in silence.

"Are you going to be a clergyman some day?" asked Miss Tremortan at last.

"Do you know, it's quite wonderful the number of people who ask me that question," replied Mr. Fielding, in a tone of some vexation. "They still seem to cling to that old-fashioned notion that it is impossible to take an interest in the poor unless one is a clergyman, and does it professionally. Now *my* experience is diametrically opposed to this theory."

May acquiesced meekly. It was a subject upon which she was so profoundly ignorant that she could offer no opinion.

They were now out on the open hill, above Croton Grange. In ten minutes more the walk would be over. By mutual consent they sat down on the grassy slope and continued the conversation.

"My real project for the future," said Maurice, with his eyes fixed dreamily on the distant horizon, "is eventually to go into Parliament. At present I am accumulating a vast body of facts that must tell. I shall put things in such a way as to secure a hearing for the poor that they have never had before. I know it sounds presumptuous to say so. Many people have tried the same thing and failed. Even then, is it not better to fail in a noble cause than to attempt nothing?"

Miss Tremortan's heart beat responsively. She had never before encountered an enthusiast face to face. They are not to be met with as a rule in the country. The conversation at Croton Grange was wont to turn exclusively on dogs and horses, with an interval during the summer, devoted to the interminable discussion of outdoor games. On all these topics she spoke with the weight of an acknowledged authority. The fact that there were whole regions of thought and action outside her somewhat restricted experience came with all the force of a revelation

She longed to hear more about these energetic workers, who, according to Mr. Fielding, were slaving for humanity at large, in a way unexampled in the history of civilization. There were women amongst them, and he dwelt much on the power of female influence to effect reformatations that were little short of miraculous.

"With gifts like yours, for instance, you could do a work of which you little dream," he concluded.

Like all enthusiasts he reserved to himself the right of making exceedingly personal remarks.

"Oh, I don't know. That sort of thing is not in my line at all," said May, laughing rather nervously.

"At all events you might try," pleaded the young man. "The chief thing is to get in touch with the people. Everything else follows naturally."

It was very beautiful, and though open to the charge of vagueness, not the less fascinating on that account. When the inevitable moment of parting approached, May pressed her new friend, who was immediately returning to his work in London, to let her know from time to time how his schemes for the amelioration of humanity were progressing. Mr. Fielding willingly acceded to her request. He wrote good letters and was fully aware of it.

These letters were great facts in Miss Tremortan's life during the next year. They arrived at irregular intervals. Sometimes two or three together. Then weeks would elapse without a word. Seemingly whenever the writer was inclined, he disburdened himself of what was uppermost in his thoughts. His enthusiasm seemed to communicate itself to the very paper on which the burning words were scribbled; so that May thrilled as she read of the great deeds that were to be done, in the same world in which it was her destiny to live only for amusement. Possibly these stirring letters were the result of more careful preparation than was apparent; at any rate they served to keep the writer and his doings constantly in her thoughts.

About this time Miss Tremortan began to live a double life—an outer one exclusively occupied with very mundane subjects, in strict accordance with family tradition; whilst co-existent with it was an under-current of thoughts and feelings, to which those around her had not the faintest clue. At first she was considerably puzzled how to take any share in the great work, which

appealed to her as much by its seeming novelty as by the eloquence of its exponent.

The few poor people with whom she was personally acquainted could not accurately be described as belonging to the suffering masses. No doubt if she had appealed to the clergyman of the parish, he could have supplied her with several sufficiently harrowing cases ; but there was a certain amount of bathos about sinking into an ordinary district visitor, from which her soul rebelled. Besides, she would have perished sooner than let her family suspect that she had come under some new influence. Therefore she wandered, far away over the hills, to a few scattered cottages, so inaccessiblely situated as to have hitherto escaped the attention of local philanthropists. Here she found poverty and degradation of a sufficiently satisfactory type to make her feel that the work was genuine, and would be even worthy of Mr. Fielding's commendation when next they met. But then again, when after some time she reviewed the two or three sickly babies and starving mothers to whom she had brought help, how insignificant it all seemed compared with the great work that was going forward elsewhere, and of which he wrote with such inspired enthusiasm.

More than a year passed without the expected meeting taking place. Miss Tremortan was much disappointed at having missed Maurice Fielding in the spring. He had just left London as she came up, and that little fact took all the charm out of an otherwise enjoyable visit. But now, as the bright autumn days set in, she was again living in hope. Meeting Mrs. Wood accidentally one day, that good lady had mentioned that her nephew was expected very shortly. She was about to add more, but Miss Tremortan, overcome by an altogether novel feeling of shyness, abruptly turned the conversation. It was some time since Maurice had written, and she had been more depressed by his silence than she quite realized herself. Now, however, at the prospect of a near meeting, she glowed with an ill-defined hope, of which she was more than half-ashamed.

About a week after receiving Mrs. Wood's information, Miss Tremortan might have been seen walking over the bare sheep-cropped downs above Croton Grange, a heavy basket on her arm, and surrounded by half-a-dozen yelping terriers. It was nominally with a view to exercising these same terriers that she

frequently undertook lengthy expeditions on the hills, from which she returned jaded, but with a serene sense of duty accomplished. Never did conspirator take greater pains to conceal his nefarious designs than Miss Tremortan in dissembling her charitable intent. She even went to the length of buying food at the village shop for her *protégés*, in preference to exciting suspicion by procuring it at home. By a powerful exercise of will, she contrived to maintain the same flow of careless high spirits as of old ; the merriment might at times be a little forced, but it passed muster in an unobservant family. Living a double life is a considerable mental strain, especially if one has at the same time to keep up a character for perpetual high spirits. No wonder May had acquired a somewhat worn, expectant look, which heightened the interest of her face, although detracting from its youth. In spite of the brisk September air, there was a certain weariness about her walk, and from time to time she was shaken by a violent fit of coughing, which forced her to put down the heavy basket and rest for a moment. This cough dated from a previous expedition, when being caught out on the open hills in a thunderstorm, she had returned home drenched and shivering. Ever since then all exertion had been more or less of an effort, and it was only the fear of disappointing Dick, and arousing his curiosity, that had induced her to get up at five o'clock that morning to accompany him cub-hunting. However, no mere bodily fatigue would have induced her to give up the little work she had undertaken on behalf of suffering humanity. She could not divest herself of a rather superstitious feeling that if persevered in it would be sure to bring her good luck. Moreover, she took a real interest in the bedridden old man, who was now the principal object of her care, and whose comfort in life entirely depended on the regularity of her visits. Old Joshua showered blessings on her head as she departed, renewing them twenty-fold when she promised to return with a similar store in a few days.

As May came out of the cottage into the bright sunshine, she suddenly felt an irresistible desire to put an end to her suspense and find out if Maurice had yet arrived. Formerly, in such a case, she would have gone straight to Mrs. Wood and asked the question point-blank. Now, however, she was hampered by a strange feeling of unaccountable shyness. As a compromise, she

decided to return home by a somewhat circuitous route, that lay in the direction of General Wood's house. As she walked, her face unconsciously relaxed into a smile. The process of idealization had been going on rapidly during the past year, and from being merely a young man who had attracted her fancy by a certain fascination of manner, Maurice had now become identified with all that was great and noble in life. Together, as he had vaguely hinted in his letters, they might become a great force for good ; and looking back she thought half-scornfully of her merry old life, with its strict limitation of interests.

"Poor, dear old Dick ! He will never understand. They will all think me mad," she murmured, laughing softly to herself. Then looking up she saw Maurice Fielding walking down the road towards her.

The recognition was sudden and mutual, the embarrassment such as might be expected between two people whose intimacy had increased considerably since their last meeting. They had hardly advanced beyond the first commonplaces of greeting, when Mrs. Wood's voice was heard in the distance.

"Oh, here comes my aunt," exclaimed Maurice, in an odd tone of relief, "and—and my wife."

Miss Tremortan turned very white, but it is seldom that girls betray themselves on these occasions. "Your wife?" she said slowly. "That's something new, isn't it?"

"It was rather sudden," and the young man laughed nervously, although there was no very apparent cause for his amusement. "You see, my wife's time is so occupied with public work," he continued, with an evident effort to rally his self-assurance. "No doubt you have often heard Miss Jane Wright's name mentioned in connection with a vast number of philanthropic and social questions? Let me introduce you to her, or rather, I should say, Mrs. Maurice Fielding."

May turned mechanically, and bowed to the stranger who had just come up with Mrs. Wood. She was a small, dark woman, considerably older than her husband, as might have been expected when her famous career was taken into consideration.

"We are holding meetings in the neighbourhood four days this week," began Mrs. Fielding, dropping into conversation with the easy assurance of the veteran lecturer. "Woman's work, temperance, female suffrage—we vary our subjects most even-

ings. I speak at them all, and my husband will be on the platform. Shall we have the pleasure of numbering you amongst our audience at the Town Hall this evening?"

"I think not," interposed Maurice, in a voice of affected meekness. "I believe there is a dance at the barracks to-night. That will be more in Miss Tremortan's line, from what I can remember."

"Far more!" exclaimed May passionately. "You understand my character even better than I do myself." And with a farewell that was distinctly abrupt, she turned away.

"So that girl is considered a beauty," observed Mrs. Fielding, as she watched the tall figure rapidly fading out of sight. "A life given up to every form of material self-indulgence, I suppose? Well, I trust the advance of civilization will soon render such a creature impossible. As for her horrible terriers, they have covered me all over with mud." She spoke the more acrimoniously from a lurking suspicion that her husband did not quite agree with her.

Miss Tremortan rushed away in a whirl of emotions that made her oblivious even of her fatigue. Nothing destroys illusions like ridicule; and the vision of Maurice meekly following his famous wife from platform to platform, and proudly deriving a reflected glory from her blatant eloquence, produced a species of mental nausea. Unfortunately, that was not the extent of the damage done. May had taken a well-intentioned but weak young man for a veritable hero, and in the first shock of finding out her mistake, hastily assumed that goodness was a fraud, the love of humanity a miserable delusion. It was a grave error, but she was by no means the first woman who has regarded the universe as hopelessly dislocated, because some one man has proved faithless or incapable.

As for Miss Tremortan, she struggled to the ball at the barracks, and scandalized the neighbourhood by dancing four times running with the black sheep of the regiment. After that, the pain in her side became so violent that she was obliged to ask the astonished Dick to take her home. A couple of hours later, the anxious doctor was inquiring angrily what they all meant by allowing the girl to go out in an advanced stage of inflammation of the lungs. The culprit herself by this time had gone past the point at which it was possible to reprimand her personally.

Before long her mind began to wander, and she was perpetually begging the doctors and nurses to carry food to some poor old man. Everybody agreed it was very sad, and such an unaccountable delusion. Then, whilst people were still saying to each other that with her remarkably strong constitution there was really little danger, the news flew through the neighbourhood that she was dead.

"And what makes it so very shocking is knowing that the unhappy girl lost her life entirely through her own vanity and self-will in going to that ball," said Mrs. Fielding. And though people felt she had expressed herself rather strongly, they mostly acknowledged that there was an element of truth in the remark.

S. E. CARTWRIGHT.

Into Temptation.

By A. PERRIN.

CHAPTER XXXI.

SUSPENSE.

**"Come in the evening, or come in the morning ;
Come when you're looked for, or come without warning."**

T. Davies.

I ARRIVED in London late on the evening of the —th of May, after a comfortable but uneventful voyage, and changing my original plan of going straight to Bournemouth, I took rooms at the Covent Garden Hotel, which I had heard spoken of as being nice and quiet, and arranged to stay there for a short time until I had done all my shopping.

I meant to be well dressed when I met Gerald again, so early the following day I ordered a hansom and drove to Jay's, where I passed a delightful morning.

The feeling of having a well-filled purse and complete independence was delicious. I ordered what gowns and other clothes that I wanted, regardless of cost, and bought several things that I did not in the least require, just for the pleasure of spending money. I had luncheon at a restaurant, and took care it was a good one, and all the afternoon I drove about to different shops and through the park, and, in fact, enjoyed myself immensely. But all the time I was longing for Gerald, so I only stayed in London until my gowns were finished and in my possession, and then started off for Bournemouth.

I had written to Aunt Addie telling her of my arrival, and in reply had received a most cordial invitation from her to come down to Ivy Villa at once, and stay as long as I liked. She "was sure I should be far more comfortable with her than the Careys, who never really had sufficient fires in their house."

I strongly suspected that the fact of my having returned to England a rich widow probably accounted for this change in her attitude towards me, but I decided to accept her invitation,

instead of that of the Careys, who had also asked me, as I knew I should be far more mistress of my time in her house than in theirs.

I found her just the same as I had left her, which was not surprising, considering I had only been away a little over eight months, but such a lot had happened to me in that time that I felt as if every one else must have changed as much as I had.

Mary, the parlourmaid, was exactly the same ; the ornaments and furniture in the drawing-room were precisely where I had left them, and not a blade of the grass plot at the side of the house seemed to have altered. Only the house itself and the rooms looked smaller than I had thought they were, which I suppose was due to my own ideas having expanded, and being accustomed to the huge rooms of the house at Kuttahpore.

It was a lovely spring afternoon, and yet there was Aunt Addie bundled up on the sofa as usual, with her smelling salts in her hand and the shawl I remembered so well drawn over her shoulders. How *could* she go on living month after month and year after year, always seeing the same things, thinking the same thoughts, and passing each day exactly like the other? Death itself would at least be a change from such maddening monotony.

"Oh, my dear Josephine," exclaimed Aunt Addie, opening her arms as I was ushered into the room by Mary, "what a pleasure to have you back again. I never dared to hope I should live to see you once more."

Aunt Addie kissed me tearfully, and seemed quite overcome by her emotion.

"I'm very glad to find you so little altered," I said, sitting down by the sofa. "How have you been all this winter?"

"Oh, my dear, my lungs were most troublesome, and as soon as I recovered from one attack of influenza I was seized with another. The climate in England is terrible. I really felt tempted to offer myself to you on a visit out in India, before I heard of your sad loss."

"I don't think you would have liked it," I said, smiling to myself as I pictured Aunt Addie in India, her notions of that country being vague in the extreme; "you see we marched about all the cold weather in tents."

"Dear me! It must have been awkward being constantly sur-

rounded by soldiers," said Aunt Addie, with whom the word "march" and visions of red coats were synonymous; and knowing that any effort on my part to separate the two in her brain would be labour wasted, I allowed the remark to pass unheeded.

"Of course I should have come out during the summer if I had done so at all," announced Aunt Addie; "the heat always suits me admirably. I wish I had known your poor husband better. What did you say he died of?"

"The doctor said it was a case of heat apoplexy," I answered.

"Heat apoplexy," repeated Aunt Addie thoughtfully. "Now I wonder if that was what I felt the other day? I certainly did not recognize it as any of my old complaints: it was a curious suffocating sensation. Is that one of the symptoms?"

"I believe it is," I replied, feeling that heat apoplexy in such a temperature as the drawing-room of Ivy Villa would scarcely be surprising, and I made haste out of it, saying I must change my dress after my journey.

That evening Mr. and Mrs. Carey came over to tea, and I had a long business talk with the former. In the course of conversation with his wife, I managed to extract the information that the village of Ditchwater was not more than five miles out of Bournemouth, giving as my excuse for asking that I had met some people in India who lived there.

That night, after I had gone to my room to undress, I thought for a long time over my plans, and finally decided to follow Mr. Pierce's advice and write a short note to Gerald, asking him to come and see me.

This I did, saying nothing about Andrew's death, merely stating that I was in England and with Aunt Addie at Bournemouth, and asking him to come and see me as soon as possible. I folded up the letter smiling to myself. How little he would guess as he read it what I had to tell him! He would be glad enough to get it, and know I was so near, but what would he say when he heard the real truth? I would have him shown into the dining-room; I must tell Mary I was expecting a visitor, and then when I knew he was there, I would open the door very quietly and slip in. Perhaps his back would be turned, or he would not hear me enter, and would see me quite suddenly, and I pictured the glad look of delight in his eyes and the unutterable happiness of finding myself in his arms once more.

I would wear my widow's cap—*that* would tell him what had happened at once. How lucky I had taken so much trouble to get a really becoming one in London. I put it on and looked at myself in the glass. The soft white crêpe rested lightly on my yellow hair, and the fringe, which was now properly cut and established as a fact, curled softly round the edges, making an effective background for my dark eyes and eyebrows.

My altered circumstances had already improved me, and I came to the satisfactory conclusion that Gerald would have but little fault to find with me in the way of looks, though I was conscious that in other respects I was not nearly good enough for such a man as he was.

I posted my letter myself the next morning, and then went on to see the Careys, where I stayed till late in the afternoon, trying to make the time pass as quickly as possible.

I calculated that my letter would reach its destination that evening, in which case Gerald might make his appearance that night, and after I got back to Ivy Villa I sat momentarily expecting to hear the front door bell ring until Aunt Addie had gone to bed and it was past eleven o'clock, when I came to the conclusion that the letter would be delivered the following morning, and went to my room with a book to try and read myself to sleep.

But it was no good. I could think of nothing but Gerald. I rehearsed my meeting with him again and again in my imagination, and could not make up my mind whether he should find me in the room when he was shown in, or whether I should come in afterwards. Sometimes I almost determined to go out to the door, or be waiting in the garden when he arrived.

Altogether, by the time the morning came, I had worked myself up into such a state of excitement that I could not touch any breakfast, and found it impossible to sit still for a moment.

It was a pouring wet day, but I knew this would make no difference to Gerald, and I was rather glad than otherwise, as it prevented my continually going to the gate to look up and down the road, as I should have felt tempted to do had the day been fine.

The rain and my incessant movements rather tried Aunt Addie's patience, and now and then she almost forgot that I was Mrs. Boscawen the rich widow instead of Josephine Cameron her

penniless niece, and I could see that she had hard work to restrain herself from treating me as the latter. She relieved her feelings by abusing Tom, and giving me an account of all his misdemeanours since I had left England up to the present date.

"Such an expense that dreadful boy is!" she complained. "What with his schooling, and his pocket money, and his journeys, he costs me more than I can add up. Now that you are so well off, Josephine, I think you might do something for him."

"Oh," I said absently, straining my ears for the sound of wheels at the door; and thinking I heard them, I rushed into the hall, leaving the drawing-room door open. It proved to be a false alarm, and when I returned I found Aunt Addie pulling the bell violently and in a state of great agitation.

"Shut the door! oh, shut the door!" she exclaimed hysterically. "You wretched woman! You did it on purpose; I *know* you did. You're afraid of having me as a burden on your hands, and you want to get rid of me. Don't attempt to deny it."

It was some time before I could succeed in pacifying her and convincing her that I had no desire to cause her death, but the excitement had the effect of leaving her peevish and exacting and causing her to throw off all effort at making herself agreeable.

"I suppose you call that a widow's cap," she remarked spitefully, catching me adjusting it in front of the glass over the mantelpiece.

"Yes," I answered amicably. "They are so much nicer than the close ugly things that used to be worn, aren't they?"

"I don't approve of them," said Aunt Addie shortly. "Widow's cap, indeed! Marry-again cap I should call it."

I could scarcely keep from laughing at this speech, which was delivered with all the venom that Aunt Addie was capable of, and forcibly reminded me of the frequent remarks of the like nature which she used to level at me in the old days. I tried to please her by promising that I would do all in my power for Tom, but she was past conciliating, and declared she felt an attack of influenza coming on in consequence of the open door, so that at last I took refuge in the dining-room, where I tried to

pass the time with one of the novels I had brought down from London.

Twelve o'clock passed—then one o'clock—and no Gerald.

I felt as if I was going mad. I searched my brain for some reason for his non-appearance, and then it struck me that perhaps he was away from home. How stupid of me not to have thought of that before. Of course if he did not come to-day I should know that he was away.

The evening came and went, and no tall, well-dressed man came to the door of Ivy Villa to ask for Mrs. Boscawen. I went to bed feeling depressed and miserable, though I knew his coming would only be delayed a couple of days at the most ; my letter would of course be forwarded to him. Yet the strain of the fevered expectancy that had filled my heart and brain all through that long weary day was almost more than I could bear, and I broke down when I went to bed that night and cried unrestrainedly. I tortured myself with suggestions that the letter might have gone astray, that perhaps his correspondence was not forwarded when he was away from home, and in that case there was no knowing when I should see him. I made plan after plan, one moment deciding to write again and the next that I would wait one more day, and so on till I felt almost delirious.

I knew I was giving myself a great deal of unnecessary discomfort, and that I had only to possess my soul in patience for a couple of days at the most ; but the prospect of even so short a delay having the power to throw me into such a state of mind only showed me more clearly how strong was my love for Gerald. I dared not go out the next morning, for any moment might see him at the door ; the time seemed interminable, and my nerves were in such a state that the least sound made me start violently and set my heart beating wildly. As the afternoon wore on I determined to try and get some rest, for on catching sight of my face in the glass I felt quite frightened, it looked so white and drawn with expectation and want of sleep. For two nights I had scarcely closed my eyes, nor had I slept much at all since I came to England, so intense had been my desire to meet Gerald.

I wearily left the dining-room, where I had been sitting, and was just ascending the stairs when a loud ring at the door bell made me stop breathless. I called to Mary as she was crossing

the hall, and told her that if the visitor was a gentleman to see me she was to show him into the dining-room, and then I ran with the speed of lightning to my own room.

I sat down on my bed for a moment to try and calm myself, and I listened intently till I heard a door shut and Mary coming up the stairs.

I stood up shaking all over, and could hardly keep from giving a cry of excitement when she knocked at my door, and said in her prim, stiff little voice :

“A gentleman to see you, ma’am. I’ve shown him into the dining-room.”

My pulses throbbed wildly. I went to the dressing-table and put myself tidy with trembling hands. How foolish I had been to worry so over nothing and give my eyes those black lines underneath them. I did not look half so nice now as yesterday morning, but all the same I ran downstairs with a happy conviction that whatever I looked like it would make no difference in Gerald’s love for me.

When I reached the dining-room door I stopped for one moment before I went in to meet the happiness that was waiting for me on the other side, and then, with a little gasp of hope and joy, I turned the handle and entered the room.

CHAPTER XXXII.

INSULT TO INJURY.

“Has this fellow no feeling of his business ?”—*Shakespeare.*

“OH! How d’ye do, Mrs. Boscawen? Very glad indeed to meet you again.”

What did it mean? Certainly there was Gerald; I could not mistake him for anybody else. But there was no glad look of delight on his face. The joy in my eyes was not repeated in his. I had entered the room ready to throw myself into his arms, which I had felt so sure would be held out for me, and he had met me with only this cold formal greeting. I put out my hand blindly as I tried to look at him through the mist that was gathering before my eyes.

He took my hand and shook it carelessly, dropping it almost immediately, and then politely turned a chair round for me.

"How long are you home for?" he asked, sitting down opposite me and crossing his legs. "You must have had a grilling time in the Red Sea."

He spoke as if I were an acquaintance who had recently been introduced to him, and his face wore a set, polite smile.

Surely I was dreaming, and this was all a hideous nightmare! I made an effort to speak, but my lips felt so dry and stiff that I could hardly move them, and before I could say a word he began again:

"Did you leave everybody well at ——? What was the name of the place where we met? Kut—— something, wasn't it? I can never remember names. It was very good of you to write and let me know you were here. Has Mr. Boscawen come home too?"

I put my hands up to my head and found I had forgotten my cap. I must tell him myself what had happened.

"My husband is dead," I said very slowly, listening to the words as if they were being uttered by somebody else.

"Really," he answered, with an air of concern. "I'm very sorry. I had no idea of it. How very sad."

"Gerald!" I cried involuntarily, "what does it all mean?"

He started slightly and cleared his throat with a little nervous cough. I roused myself with an effort from the stupid, bewildered feeling that had crept over me and looked straight at him; he turned his eyes away from my face, and *then* I began to understand. My spirit rose, and I spoke out clearly:

"I asked you to come and see me," I said rapidly, "and you came; and now you are here you must and shall explain why you are treating me like this. Do you want me to *ignore* all that passed between us at Kuttahpore?"

He kept his eyes still fixed on the ground, hesitating for several minutes while I waited, breathless, for his answer.

"I—I didn't think you took it seriously," he stammered.

"Oh! I can't believe it!" I cried desperately. "You must explain. There's something behind all this. Tell me it's a joke; tell me anything; only I shall go mad if I don't understand!"

"I have told you," he said doggedly. "Of course I can't deny that there was something, some nonsense, between us when I was at Kuttahpore; but, as I said, I never dreamt you thought more of it than I did."

"What kind of a woman did you take me for?" I said hopelessly, "and why did you do it?"

I knew I ought to have risen indignantly, and cowed him with withering scornful words, but instead of that, I sat stricken and helpless, from the suddenness of the blow that had come upon me.

He laughed disagreeably, reminding me of an animal driven into a corner, with no alternative left but to show fight.

"What could you expect me to take you for, after all I had heard about my brother and yourself, even if the way in which you met my own advances was not sufficient?"

My blood boiled, and the knowledge that I had been such a fool as to believe in this man, stung me to mad fury. I tried to keep calm, though my rage was almost choking me.

"Tell me at once what you heard about your brother and myself!" I demanded.

"If you insist," he said, "of course I must tell you, though it would have been pleasanter if you had taken your cue from me and ignored the whole business. Will you let it stand and part friends? Or are you determined to make me speak plainly?"

"*Part friends!*" I exclaimed, looking at him in horror. "What can you be thinking of? Go on, please, and tell me everything. I have a right to know."

"Very well. I will put it before you just as the case stands. I arrived in Kuttahpore to look up my only brother, who had always been the greatest anxiety to my mother and myself, and the first thing I heard was, that he had got entangled with a woman, and that a scandal was inevitable sooner or later. The woman of course was yourself, and my informant Mrs. Herring, and I naturally decided to stay on and see how matters stood for myself."

"Go on," I said. I was determined to hear it out to the end.

"I said nothing to my brother, knowing his temper, and that it would only do more harm than good, but I waited till you arrived. I daresay you remember that evening at Dr. Herring's house? And then I saw that there evidently was something between you, and my suspicions were confirmed the next evening, when I turned round on the road and saw you walking hand in hand with him."

I made no attempt to explain anything. What did it matter now what he thought?

"My brother has always been very wild," he went on half apologetically, "and I knew if it came to a public scandal the disgrace would half break my mother's heart, so I made up my mind to step in between you. I knew if I reasoned with him he would only bring matters to a crisis, and I concluded that you were probably like most Anglo-Indian women of the stamp that I have come across or heard of, and would leave the poorer for the richer man without hesitation—which, forgive me for saying so, you did."

"Thank you," I said. "You have explained yourself very clearly. I have only one more question to ask you, and that is, did you receive a telegram or not, the night of the Putwa ball?"

"Yes," he said; "I did get a telegram. But I meant to go then, any way. I had managed to get my brother transferred from Kuttahpore, and there was nothing to keep me. Besides—I—you—that is——"

"Well?"

"I thought—you know, I lost my head that night, and perhaps you remember I asked you a question. I did not mean to repeat it. There, Mrs. Boscawen, I have told you the whole truth, and if I have said some brutal things, my only excuse is that you insisted on my speaking plainly."

"Yes," I said; "and now that you have spoken, you had better go before I can find words to tell you what I think of you. I suppose, in your own eyes, you have done nothing to reproach yourself with, but if ever you are punished as you deserve, I hope I may be there to see it."

I knew I was speaking in a high-pitched, unnatural voice, that the words seemed to tumble out of my mouth faster than I could form them, and that all I wanted was to be alone to fight out my battle of bitter shame by myself.

I remember ringing the bell for Mary to show him out, and I saw him leave the room without one trace of pity or self-reproach on his handsome lying face. What was I to him? Only a typical Anglo-Indian flirt, who had tried to draw his brother into a serious entanglement and with whom he had dealt as he considered necessary. Only a——. Then I heard the hall door

bang as he went out, and the room began to spin round like a gigantic wheel, and after that came a long merciful blank.

CHAPTER XXXIII. .

AN OLD FRIEND.

"Sweet is pleasure after pain."—*Dryden*.

FOR nearly a fortnight I hovered between life and death, struck down with brain fever, and when at last consciousness returned to me, I was so weak that I was hardly expected to recover.

I learnt afterwards that Mary had found me insensible on the dining-room floor, and calling the cook, who was a strong, powerful woman, they had carried me upstairs to bed between them. Finding it impossible to bring me round by means of cold water and burnt feathers, they had fetched Aunt Addie, who sent at once for the doctor.

Mrs. Carey, on hearing that I had been taken seriously ill, came over without loss of time, and even though professional nurses were engaged for me, she did more than any of them towards helping to save my life.

Aunt Addie established herself permanently in her bedroom, and wrote long imaginary descriptions to her friends of all she was doing for me, and the dreadful anxiety she was suffering on my account ; in fact, by the time I was almost convalescent, she had completely persuaded herself that my recovery was entirely due to her exertions and good nursing ; though the utmost she had done was to come into my room occasionally to ask how I was, and had once or twice given me my medicine, each time pouring it into the bed instead of down my throat.

When I was getting better, and able to think without feeling faint and giddy, I often wondered whether I had raved much about Gerald in my delirium, but was afraid to ask Mrs. Carey, and as she herself never alluded to my wanderings or the cause of my illness, I concluded that I had probably revealed everything.

But whatever I had said made no difference in her manner towards me, for no one could have been kinder than she was during the time I was getting well, which seemed to me interminable.

I was surprised that I did not brood more over the cruel shock that I had received. I certainly did think of it constantly, but

much more as if it was somebody else's trouble that I was sorry about, and nothing to do with myself.

I often wondered why Gerald had spoken so plainly, and why he had responded to my letter in person, or in fact at all, but I quite understood his motive when one morning I took up the paper which was always sent in on my breakfast tray, and read an elaborate account of his marriage to an heiress in the neighbourhood.

He had been afraid I might prove troublesome after writing to him, and had taken the safest method of satisfying himself that he had nothing to fear from me.

Well, it had been a very bitter experience, but, on the whole, perhaps it had done me good, and at any rate I was not likely to mistake brass for gold in such a hurry again.

Directly I was strong enough to bear the move, Mrs. Carey insisted on my going over to the Vicarage.

"You want a lot of looking after yet," she said, "and it will save me a great deal of running backwards and forwards if you are actually in our house."

So I went, and she plied me so vigorously with beef tea, jellies, and tonics, that I was very soon allowed to go out for a short time every day.

At first Aunt Addie sent over her bath chair, into which I was unwillingly packed, and dragged about the garden by William, who mercilessly bumped me from the grass on to the gravel, and over sticks and stones, until I rebelled, and insisted on sending the chair back, much to Aunt Addie's satisfaction, who had made a martyr of herself over lending it, although it had been entirely her own suggestion.

I then arranged to hire the best carriage and pair that Bournemouth could produce, and enjoyed my outings immensely, either by myself, or with Mrs. Carey and the children, who often came with me.

About this time Aunt Addie reminded me that the commencement of Tom's summer holidays was drawing near, and requested me to make some arrangement for him, as now I had come home so well off, she intended to wash her hands of him.

"That boy has taken months off my life already," she said; "and I never wish to see him, or hear of him, again."

I consulted Mrs. Carey as to what was to be done, and she

placidly suggested that he should come to the Vicarage, at any rate, until some plan had been decided on as to his future career.

I had many forebodings as to the responsibility Tom's visit would bring upon my shoulders, and also felt that it was hardly fair to allow Mrs. Carey to take him in, as he was anything but an angel unawares or otherwise. But with her usual prompt kind-heartedness, she turned a deaf ear to the suggestion that I should go elsewhere to receive Tom for his holidays, and said that she had no doubt he would be able to amuse himself out of doors a great deal, and that probably we should see very little of him.

I could make no plans for my own future until Tom's had been decided on, but I had a little vision in my brain of a cosy flat in London as my head-quarters, and then the continent for the winter, with a smart footman and maid as my attendants. I had not broached the subject of my departure to Mrs. Carey yet, as she had quite made up her mind that I was going to live with them, and be guided by Mr. Carey as to the disposal of all my spare cash in the way of charity. She also had in contemplation a wholesale migration to Mr. Carey's relations in Warwickshire for six weeks in the autumn, which I was resolved to escape at any cost, even at the risk of offending her. I knew I owed her a deep debt of gratitude, but her husband's relations I could not, and would not, face; I had seen their photographs, and that was quite enough, the ladies being apparently partial to long dangling jet earrings, and one and all wore their watch-chains twisted round their necks, while what men there were, possessed straggling whiskers and lengthy, melancholy features, in which I traced a decided family resemblance to Mr. Carey himself.

Now that I was strong enough to take an active part in it, the daily life at the Vicarage was beginning to bore me beyond description. I hated breakfast at eight o'clock, church decorations, and dinner in the middle of the day. Whenever Mrs. Carey appealed to me for money on behalf of their local charities, I gave as much as she asked for and more, but I could not get up any enthusiasm over mothers' meetings, blanket funds, flannel petticoats, and Sunday schools. What society they were accustomed to mix in was extremely dull and uninteresting, and failed to amuse me in the smallest degree, so that I longed to get away and enjoy my new life. I could do so with the less com-

punction because I knew very well that Mrs. Carey's kindness to me was due more to the conscientious way in which she always did her duty by her neighbours, than to any strong sense of affection towards me individually. I felt that I should be giving her no actual pain by taking my own line, and there would be nothing to reproach myself with on that score.

My affairs had all been wound up, and I was now absolute mistress of my seventeen hundred a year, so that when I had provided for Tom there would be nothing to prevent my following my own sweet will.

Tom arrived so late one Saturday evening that it was impossible for him to do more than have some supper and go straight to bed, which was rather a relief to us all. He did not appear to me to have grown in the least, and looked exactly the same as when I had seen him last; though, when I incautiously said as much, he became extremely indignant, and informed me that he was an inch taller than Barton, a fact which seemed to cause him the most intense gratification.

He was dreadfully late for breakfast the next morning, and absolutely refused to go to church, so being rather glad of the excuse myself, I decided to stay at home with him, and when the others had departed, took him into the garden to have a talk about his future.

He seemed very shy of me, and shuffled along awkwardly at my side, purposely trying to keep out of step with me, which so occupied his attention that he was quite silent.

"You know, Tom," I began, "I've been left very well off."

"Lucky beggar," murmured Tom under his breath.

"And of course I mean to do all I can for you; but you will have to work hard and learn to depend on yourself, because if ever I were to marry again I should lose all my money. Do you see?"

"Yes," said Tom humbly; "what d'you want me to do?"

"What do you want to be yourself?"

Tom stopped short, and looked at me incredulously.

"Do you mean you'll let me go up for the army?"

"When you're old enough, if you wish to."

"Oh, you brick!" cried Tom in an ecstasy, and forgetting his new-born awe of me, he seized me round the waist and made me dance up and down in the most undignified fashion.

"*Tom!*" I gasped, "if you don't stop you shan't go up for anything!"

He let me go, and contented himself with turning head over heels on the grass, while I endeavoured to put my dress right, which had been pulled out of all shape by his antics.

"Now do listen to me, Tom," I said, trying to gain his attention. "Of course you must go back to the same school for the present, until you're old enough to go to a crammer's. But I'm thinking now about your holidays. Have you any plans yourself?"

"Only to get away from here," replied Tom decidedly. "Barton's asked me to go to him, and you *must* let me, Joe; I can't stand a parson like old Carey, and those two beastly little kids are so aggravating."

"Very well," I said; "you can go in a few days if you like. But while you *are* here, do try to behave yourself, and don't tease the children, now, will you?"

"I'll try not to," said Tom with an effort. "I say, will you let me have some pocket money? It's awful being with other fellows at school and getting twopence a week from that old screw Aunt Addie!"

"Of course you shall," I said, feeling sorry for what I knew must have been the poor boy's mental sufferings on the subject. "Will five shillings a week be enough?"

"Oh!" gasped Tom; "why, that's what Barton gets! By Jove! How glad I am you married old curry powder, and that he kicked the bucket afterwards!"

"Oh, hush, Tom!" I said severely; "you shall have the pocket money, but you really must try to improve your manners. They're too awful."

"You should hear Barton," remarked Tom drily, and then, to my astonishment, he suddenly darted from my side and took refuge among some shrubs at the other end of the lawn, from whence he pointed and went through the most bewildering gesticulations. At last I saw that the reason of his flight was a visitor, who was being conducted from the house by the parlour-maid. I wondered who it could be, and why she was bringing him out into the garden, and it was not until he was quite close to me that I recognized the familiar features of Mr. Pierce.

Yes, it was really Mr. Pierce, but looking so smartened up in his new clothes, with his hair cut and his moustache trimmed,

and his face such a funny red-brown colour in the light of the English sun, that he hardly seemed the same man I had left standing on the little platform of an Indian station, dressed, regardless of appearance, in a comfortable washing suit and an old pith helmet on his head.

"Oh! I *am* glad to see you!" I exclaimed, with a hundred questions about Kuttahpore on the tip of my tongue. "How long have you been in England?"

"I only landed about ten days ago," he said, shaking my hand heartily, "and I came down here directly I got into some decent clothes. One feels such a ruffian when one first lands. What have you been doing to yourself, Mrs. Boscawen? Have you been ill?"

"Didn't you get my letter?"

"No. It must have reached Kuttahpore after I started. What made you ill?" he asked anxiously.

"Oh! I think I did too much," I answered evasively. "Will you sit down on this seat? Or would you rather come into the house? The Careys will be back from church soon."

"I'd rather stay out here," he said, and we sat down on the prim garden bench, with the red and white awning over our heads.

"Now," he demanded, when we were settled, "what made you ill?"

"I told you."

"You didn't tell me the truth."

"You're another!" I responded, half laughing and half vexed.

"Perhaps you'd rather not tell me," persisted Mr. Pierce. "If so, I won't ask again."

"Yes," I said, "I will tell you. Only it's rather dreadful."

He only nodded his head, looking at me intently with his kind brown eyes, and then slowly and painfully I told him all that had passed since my arrival in England. When I had finished I waited to hear him say, "I told you so," or perhaps a more polite equivalent, but he said nothing of the kind. He only took my hand and gave it a sudden squeeze, which told me better than a thousand words could have done that he was sorry for all I had suffered.

"You warned me," I said humbly, "but I wouldn't listen. And I think now it was better for it all to happen as it did. It was the only way to convince me."

"Yes," said Mr. Pierce thoughtfully, "perhaps it was better. The shock must have tried you terribly, though. Will you tell me something else?"

"What?"

"Well, do you still care for him? Or have you quite got over it?"

"I *think* I have," I said, "though perhaps I don't hate him as much as I ought to. It was a great deal my own fault. I fell down and worshipped too readily. I know he isn't worth a thought, but somehow I never think of him as I saw him last—always as he was before."

"The damned scoundrel!" said Mr. Pierce deliberately, and I wondered what Mrs. Carey would have said if she had overheard my friend's language.

(To be concluded.)

Some Ways of the World : Bygone and Present.

By W. W. FENN.

No. V.

WILLIAM COWPER, our sweet domestic poet, and philosopher of "The Sofa," in a private note to a friend, recently sold by auction amongst other valuable autographs and curious manuscripts, says, in effect, "a chatty letter may always be written about anything or nothing, according as that anything or nothing occurs." If this be true, as it assuredly is, how additionally true is the dictum in the case of reminiscences. For with these screeds has not the writer the advantage of dealing only with things which he professes to vouch for as having actually occurred. Their results too, in most instances, lie before him, and it is only a question of how far he allows his comments and speculations thereon to run away with him, that any doubt can arise as to the soundness of his deductions. If seeing is believing, his experiences are, as it were, the testimony by which his posterity may judge of his credit for veracity. Should he choose to romance, and build up elaborate fictions on the bases of facts he has learned, or which are within his own knowledge, his readers, in nine cases out of ten, will remain in ignorance of his want of punctilious accuracy. Of course, it may be that he prefers giving an intellectually imaginative colour to events which have passed, more or less, under his own eyes, to merely reporting the hard, bare, dry facts. He may prefer interpreting his personal acquaintance with men and manners, places and faces, through the bright medium of his own particular spectacles; but this is a matter of taste, and is brought about very much by the natural disposition of the writer or speaker. If he be endowed with an æsthetic and artistic temperament, he will necessarily treat things in a far more picturesque and dramatic light than the commonplace observer, who fails to get anything approaching an inspiration or emotional sensation out of them. Hence, be they mere nothings or something, they may still be touched with an interest

not otherwise their own. It is not given to many, however, to spin out "the idle chatter of irresponsible frivolity," as Lord Beaconsfield called it, in a fashion that will at once enlist the attention of reader or listener. The reviews of books of reminiscences are, therefore, generally more interesting than the books themselves, for if the reviewer knows his trade, he will, as the phrase goes, gut the volume, and dish up the plums, stewing down the rest into a mere lubricating sauce. At any rate, the modern taste demands some such culinary treatment of matters literary. The plums, and nothing but the plums, satisfy, and if this may be considered "reather too rich," as, according to Mr. Sam Weller, the young woman remarked on being supplied with "a pork pie as was all fat," it is, nevertheless, the demand of the present day, and the British public seldom makes a demand that is not immediately met. To my thinking, the B. P. are quite right in this case, for the fact is that in this age of high-pressure, when the energy and activity of three ancestral existences are condensed into one life by every busy Englishman, those who toil in the pursuit of business or pleasure rarely find time to meditate upon the essential advancement characterizing the general conditions of their physical being, as contrasted with those of their immediate forefathers. They are apt to take their present advantages for granted, regarding them as accomplished facts to be acquiesced in rather than approved of. It is human to be discontented with that we have, and, indeed, dissatisfaction with actualities is one of the mainsprings of progress, ever prompting the more enterprising spirits to aim at still further improvements. It also inclines them to ignore or under-estimate the inferiority of bygone days, and to lend a more willing ear to the "praisers of times past" than to the eulogists of contemporary achievement. At the same time, these folks should be reminded, according to some recent commentator, that their estate is far more gracious, in countless respects, than was that of their progenitors, even within the time limits of Queen Victoria's reign. In this regard, an ounce of living testimony is worth a ton of lifeless record. Sir Harry Verney, a representative Englishman coeval with the nineteenth century, now drawing towards its close, has lately addressed a singularly interesting and pregnant communication to a contemporary, bearing witness to the great ameliorations effected in "many departments of life

in England " within his personal remembrance, and denouncing as unjustifiable alike the complaints of the present and laudations of the "good old times" that frequently reach his cognizance. To latter-day pessimists there is confutation strong of their dismal doctrines in the reminiscences of this intelligent and perspicuous nonagenarian, who, as a lad, paid his respects to Queen Charlotte at Windsor Castle ; distinctly remembers seeing " the blind old king on the terrace," and who held a commission in the Seventh Fusiliers more than seventy years ago. In the opening paragraphs of his refreshing letter, Sir Harry writes : " Few men can tell more than myself of the first two decades of the century," adding, " I have tried to look back through my long life, and to recollect whether some departments of life are not better in various ways than they were when I was young and even in middle age ; and I am glad to find so many classes of our countrymen who, I believe, are now in better circumstances than in my younger days, and that it can be truly said that things are better than they were in the good old days." How real, in moral as well as material respects, are the improvements thus alluded to is abundantly, though by no means exhaustively, exemplified by the venerable baronet in the subsequent relation of some of his earlier experiences.

When Harry Verney was an infantry subaltern, serving with his regiment in Ireland, it was no uncommon thing to hear gentlemen of high social station swear freely in the course of ordinary conversation ; nor was excessive drinking out of fashion even in the most exalted circles. At Carlton House, under the auspices of the "First Gentleman in Europe," conviviality and intemperance became convertible terms. Noblemen, statesmen and legislators, eminent lawyers, soldiers and sailors, were not ashamed to fuddle themselves with strong liquor during and after dinner, and to make their appearance, later on, in the drawing-room of their hostess, unsteady of gait and incoherent of speech, with physical powers and intellectual faculties semi-paralyzed by inebriation. Within the recollection of persons twenty years younger than Sir Harry Verney, men of birth, breeding and distinction in their respective careers might not infrequently be seen at evening parties, in ladies' society, manifestly the worse for drink. The "two-bottle man" was by no means a social rarity in Sir Harry's younger days, nor was even that now obsolete

monstrosity, a "three-bottle man," unknown to him. Now-a-days a fiery dragon would scarcely excite greater surprise or consternation in polite society, metropolitan or provincial, than an English gentleman addicted to swallowing from two to three quarts of wine at a sitting. Such an immoderate toper would speedily be cut by all his respectable male friends and acquaintances; no lady would willingly speak to him or even look at him; no decent club would admit him to membership or tolerate his presence within its precincts as a guest. Among the upper and middle classes in this country the habit of deep drinking has been relegated during the Victorian age to the limbo of exploded barbarisms, where it moulders, all but forgotten, together with a host of other defunct abominations, such as verbal profanity, anecdotal coarseness, duelling, dicing and street-brawling. With respect to these objectionable customs of the "days when George the Third was king," the present generation may fairly claim to have "reformed them altogether," as Sir Harry Verney points out with justifiable complacency.

In pursuit of the plums thickly studding this pudding of Sir Harry's, we find him noting the vast change for the better marking the characteristics of the church dignitaries of the present day. He considers that, as a rule, they are far more earnest, zealous and devoted to their holy calling, and in their general utterances and behaviour abroad, than when he was a youngster. He passes from high to low, rich and poor, always with the same assumption, for ever holding up the bygone, as odious or reprehensible, when brought to contrast with modern equivalents. One of his reviewers, whom I have here and there quoted above, very properly picks out many other plums, to the following effect. Sir Harry contrasts the professional sick-nurse of to-day with the Sairey Gamps and Betsy Prigs of a period at which he himself had already attained ripe manhood, and draws a lively comparison between the "post-boys, ostlers and hackney coachmen" of half a century ago and the railway servants of time present. Of these, he observes, the London and North-Western Company alone employs more than seventy thousand, and there are some three hundred thousand in the whole kingdom, whom he gratefully and justly characterizes as uniformly trustworthy and careful of passengers and their luggage, and universally renowned for their unfailing civility and sedulous obligingness.

Sir Harry successively adverts to the establishment in every English county, within his remembrance, of some institution, in the form of a museum or library, altogether free from politics or party influence, as well as of village reading-rooms, where "farmers' and labourers' sons may spend their evenings instead of at the public-house," and of many other "good and well-directed societies for the welfare of young men and women." Moreover, he expresses the gratifying conviction that "among different classes of his fellow-countrymen there is a greatly-increased intelligence, in comparison with what he recollects in boyhood and early manhood." This is one of the results of compulsory education and other wide-reaching legislative innovations, achieved during the fulness of his years, which encourage him to believe that "we ought not to view the condition of our country with discontent and despondency." As a matter of fact, there are many modern achievements of science, not specially instanced by this wise and kindly nonagenarian, by which the present generation of Englishmen benefits in a variety of directions, the full extent of which, in all probability, it scarcely realizes. For instance, there is the little less than marvellous abatement in the national rate of mortality, attributable in great part to the formulation and enforcement of sanitation laws, to improvements in the dwellings of the poor, to medical and surgical discoveries, and to the spread of enlightenment among the lower classes, furthered and fostered by the judicious beneficence of their social superiors. No less significant of moral and material advancement is the sensible diminution of crime and pauperism during the present reign, in the course of which more than half the total number of the gaols that were crowded fifty years ago have been either totally done away with or utilized as hospitals, schools and public offices. The British poor are no longer homeless and friendless, save through the effects, in isolated cases, of their own ignorance or obstinacy. What tribute of praise may be deemed adequate to the lighting, paving and cleansing of our streets, when compared with those processes as they were carried out in the days of Sir Harry Verney's youth? Are middle-aged Britons, the children of men and women who, when of comparatively tender age, knew not omnibuses and cabs as factors in town locomotion, and were accustomed to perform their longer journeys in stage-coaches at an average rate of eight miles an hour,

sufficiently grateful to the inventions and organization that enable them to travel in conditions of swiftness and security, comfort and cheapness, that were absolutely unforeseen and undreamt of by the Englishmen who decreed the abolition of slavery and passed the first great Reform Bill?

And apropos of that one item alone—lighting; mercy on us! Do we take into account the enormous change effected in that department of domestic economy? Of course we do, when we think about it; we, that is, who have in our childhood suffered from the inconveniences and inefficiencies of the former ways of the world, in its attempts to illuminate our darkened paths, indoors or out. Why, the difference between now—and then is not much more startling than the difference between the flint, steel, tinder-box, and sulphur-tipped match machinery and the primitive method of kindling fire by rubbing two pieces of wood together. The difference between the cleanly electric light and the filthy, mal-odorous oil lamp, guttering candle, or farthing dip, formerly in use for our homes, halls and theatres, is indeed one of those advantages which the younger portion of mankind, being, as it were, born to it, too often takes as a matter of course, and without the faintest thought of thankfulness to the kindly Fates which have pitched their tents on such lucky lines as the present. Truly, one might go on dilating on each particular article of familiar use until doomsday, and not have exhausted them all then, perhaps. There is no end to them. The very pen, so called steel, with which these words are written, was looked upon as a rarity and wonder fifty years since, and even later. I don't pretend to know the most popular methods of idling in vogue by schoolboys during schooltime now, but I *do* remember that the constant mending of pens, quill pens, be it observed, enabled us to burn through many and many a five minutes, when we wanted what we called a rest for the great mental effort we were making to construe some recondite line of Latin.

But to go back to our roads. Once more contrast those of to-day with those when macadam and huge paving-stones formed the base of operations for vehicular traffic. Again, there is not much more difference between the wood and the asphalte, over which we now travel, and that old rumble-tumble progress that there was between it and the sandy, muddy tracks in existence

throughout the country a hundred years ago. After all, the ways of the world seem to find their most appropriate theme in the king's highway, for that was the conspicuous feature of the "bygone." There is a fascination in it which it is impossible to get rid of, so that one is compelled, at the risk of something like repetition, to pick out from contemporaneous descriptions of it, cognate items in reference to it. In all directions our social life seems to recur to it, and even trials by judge and jury, now and again, bring it vividly before our minds. Here is one, to wit, evoking comments quite in harmony with our subject. "It was," says the writer, "well suited to carry back the minds of those who 'bear an ancient breast' to the now remote days when 'The Swan with Two Necks,' in Lad Lane, the 'White Horse,' in Fetter Lane, the 'Angel,' in St. Clement's, the 'Golden Cross,' at Charing Cross, the 'Bull and Mouth,' in St. Martin's-le-Grand, the 'Saracen's Head,' on Snow Hill, 'The Peacock,' at Islington, and many another old coaching house were, as our American kinsmen would say, 'in full blast.' It appears that in 1882, Mr. Peter Mountain, the once well-known landlord of the 'Saracen's Head' upon Snow Hill, executed a will appointing one of his nephews, Mr. Charles Fowler, to be his executor, and leaving to him almost the whole of the property of which the testator was possessed, amounting to about ten thousand pounds. Shortly after Mr. Mountain's death, the will was propounded in usual form by the executor, who soon found to his dismay that opposition to the probate was offered by two other nephews of the testator, on the ground that he was not of sound disposing mind when he executed his final will and testament. Eventually the disputants came to a private agreement between themselves, under which the instrument was admitted to probate, all imputations in the pleadings being withdrawn." The very mention, however, of Mr. Peter Mountain's name, and of the famous tavern on Snow Hill, over which that eccentric old bachelor presided until the premises were required by the Corporation of London, when they undertook to make the Holborn Viaduct and to abolish Snow Hill altogether, recalls to many a man now in "the sere, the yellow leaf," the merry days when as a boy he went to school upon the top of one of Mr. Mountain's coaches. Who that has ever read "Nicholas Nickleby" in his youth can have forgotten the scene in which the hero of that delightful novel, accompanied by Mr. Wackford Squeers and three little

boys, his unfortunate pupils, took their departure for Yorkshire from the "Saracen's Head" at eight o'clock on a gloomy winter morning? "Snow Hill!" exclaims Charles Dickens—who knew the spot well—at the commencement of his fourth chapter: "what kind of place can quiet townspeople who see the words emblazoned in all the legibility of gilt letters and dark shading on the north-country coaches, take Snow Hill to be? What a vast number of random ideas there must be perpetually floating about regarding this same Snow Hill! The name is such a good one. Snow Hill, coupled with a Saracen's Head, picturing to us, by a double association of ideas, something stern and rugged. A bleak, desolate tract of country, open to piercing blasts and fierce wintry storms—a dark, cold and gloomy heath, lonely by day, and scarcely to be thought of by honest folks at night—this, or something like this, should be the prevalent notion of Snow Hill in those remote and rustic places through which the Saracen's Head, like some grim apparition, rushes each day and night with mysterious and ghost-like punctuality: holding its swift and headlong course in all weathers, and seeming to bid defiance to the very elements themselves."

Very different, as the accomplished author of "Nicholas Nickleby" showed us in his next passage, was the reality of that spot with which, for many a year to come, the name and memory of old Peter Mountain will be identified. There, at the very core of London, in the heart of its business and animation, stands Newgate, and, in that crowded street upon which it frowns so darkly, scores of human beings, four, six, eight or a dozen at a time, have been hurried violently out of this world, while curious and unsympathetic eyes gazed from casement, housetop, wall and pillar.

Near to the gaol, and between it and Smithfield, once stood the coachyard of the Saracen's Head Inn, "its portals guarded by two Saracens' heads and shoulders, which it was once the pride and glory of the choice spirits of the metropolis to pull down at night;" while the tavern itself, garnished with another Saracen's head, peeped from the end of the yard, and all the red-wheeled coaches standing therein bore the same emblem upon the doors of their hind boots. In the coffee-room of that historic inn stood Mr. Wackford Squeers, of Dotheboys Hall, on that memorable occasion when Charles Dickens introduced him to a

world of readers. On a corner of a bench running along a box of that gloomy coffee-room stood a little trunk, upon which a diminutive boy was perched. Suddenly the little victim gave a violent sneeze. "Halloa, sir," growls the one-eyed schoolmaster; "what's that?" "Nothing, please, sir," says the frightened boy. "Nothing?" again exclaims the tyrant. "Please, sir, I sneezed." "Oh, sneezed, did you? Then why did you say 'nothing?'" In default of a better answer, the terrified mite screws a couple of knuckles into his eyes and begins to cry, whereupon Mr. Squeers knocks him off the end of the trunk with a blow on one side of his face, and knocks him on again with a blow upon the other. It is the fashion of our modern critics to sneer at novels "written with a purpose;" but few will deny credit to the great master of the art of fiction for having extinguished the terrible Yorkshire school system of half a century since by his lifelike presentment of Dotheboys Hall. It was said that one of the schoolmasters resident at Bowes—the black and desolate village in which the ideal of Wackford Squeers is supposed to have lived—had but a single eye, and that he threatened Dickens with an action for defamation of character, because the proprietor of Dotheboys Hall was feigned to be suffering from this physical defect. On reflection, however, the aggrieved pedagogue came to the conclusion that second thoughts were best, and no proceedings were taken against the too realistic novelist. It was, as many an elderly man can now depose, by no means a delirious joy for a boy who, fifty years since, had to take his seat, like Tom Brown, the hero of Mr. Thomas Hughes' best romance, upon the top of a stage-coach at an early hour on a winter's morning. Nothing can be more fascinating or attractive than for a well-clad and well-fed clubman, seated in a comfortable arm-chair before the fire, to read the thrilling and enthusiastic description of the glories of "the road" given by General Birch Reynardson, Captain Malet, Captain Haworth, Mr. Stanley Harris, Lord William Lennox, and the immortal "Nimrod" himself. Many a boy, however, who journeyed northwards from the "Saracen's Head" or the "Bull and Mouth," when the century was young, would have told a very different tale on a bitter morning before Barnet was reached.

In 1836 there were fifty mails drawn by four horses in England, thirty in Ireland and ten in Scotland. Long before that year

Macadam had brought the chief highways of the kingdom to the highest state of perfection, and the crack coaches which left the metropolis every morning and evening were tooled by expert "knights of the bench," who regarded anything under eleven miles an hour as a poor performance. "It was the mail-coach," writes Thomas DeQuincey, "that distributed over the face of the land, like the opening of the apocalyptic vials, the heart-shaking news of Trafalgar, of Salamanca, of Vittoria, of Waterloo." During the trial of Queen Caroline, Miss Martineau tells us that all along the line of mails, crowds stood waiting in the burning sunshine for the news, which was shouted out to them as the coach passed. Again, at different stages in the history of the Reform Bill, the mail roads were, mile after mile, lined with people on the *qui vive* for the smallest instalment of news from London, and the coachmen and guards bawled themselves hoarse, as they flew onwards, in announcing the tidings. On the day and night following a great race, the name of the winner was chalked in big letters by the guard upon a black board, which he hung out at the back of the vehicle, and it is impossible to describe the importance assumed by the red-faced and red-liveried officials, whom all the country-folk regarded as the visible embodiment of his Majesty. The glorious days of "the road," as "Nimrod" painted them, had not passed out of the mind of Peter Mountain, the veteran tavern-keeper and coach-owner, upon Snow Hill, who breathed his last some seven years ago. He loved to relate that his horses were always faster than those of Mr. Horne, who kept the "Golden Cross," opposite to what is now Charing Cross Station, and that the coaches which started from the "Saracen's Head," invariably reached Finchley ahead of their rivals, which left Wood Street, Cheapside, at the same hour. Old Peter Mountain's cravats, high collars and drab breeches bespoke him indeed to be a genuine specimen of the old school."

It is a pity that the writer of the foregoing references to this venerable human landmark did not complete his picture by crowning him with a white beaver hat. All the circumstances and background depicted, against which the posthumous portrait of Mr. Mountain stands, are well within my memory; the look of that fierce Saracen's head on the boot of his coaches, resplendent in vivid colour and high-polish, rises before my

mind's eye vividly, and the interest with which I read the account of Mr. Squeers' conduct to the little boy on the trunk, was added to in no small degree by the fact that I was perfectly familiar with the old-fashioned hostelry. I used to go and peep into the coffee room, fancying, as it were, that the Yorkshire pedagogue and his victims might have been there only an hour or two before, and in passing, I opined that a vast amount of our dear Dickens's popularity in those days, amongst London boys, arose out of the circumstance that hundreds of thousands of them, as well as their elders, knew the actual places where he laid his scenes, just as I did. Youngsters, perhaps, pay less attention to the personal appearance of their elders than they do, for instance, to the look of horses and coaches, and such like objective matters, and therefore it is that, do what I will, I cannot conjure up any reliable vision of Mr. Peter Mountain himself, although I must have seen him a score of times. Hence I do not pretend to know whether he did, or did not, affect a white beaver hat. At any rate it was a common object, as the head-gear of guard and coachman, in the old coaching days, and I am reminded of it as a bygone fashion by reading that, on the occasion of a recent coaching display, two specimens of the article excited great curiosity and wonder. It was an absolute connecting link with the bygone, as worn by the professional coachmen and guards of the Brighton, Reigate and Tunbridge Wells coaches. The old-fashioned head-pieces were apparently new to some of the onlookers; for while a neatly-dressed young lady was heard to remark that it was a pity the coachmen had not brushed their hats, a stableman, whose experience had been limited to the silk hat of the London coachman, suggested that the white beavers "wanted the lamp running over them"—in other words, he thought they needed singeing.

I feel sure Peter Mountain wore one, and if he didn't, he ought. But now I can't remember whether he would be likely to adorn it with a black band. I wonder if a black band was ever put round. Of course, we see the modern white hat so decorated by "down the road" sort of gentlemen. No modern white hat is complete without the black band, but did it go with the fluffy beavers? that's what I want to know. My father had a black beaver hat, and my mother a black beaver bonnet, and they both had a great contempt at first for the silk imitation;

for if it cost a quarter of the price, a beaver was supposed to be capable of seeing out half-a-dozen trumpery silks. There was always a brave display of white beaver castors on the 4th of June, the anniversary of George the Third's birthday, in that procession of brand-new mail-coaches, as they streamed down to St. Martin's-le-Grand from their builders' manufactories. With the disappearance of the mail-coach, this *fête*, with its new harness, rosettes of flowers and ribbons, scarlet-coated guards, &c., vanished also, and the 4th of June finds no conspicuous commemorations at the end of the nineteenth century, save in the water *fête* and fireworks at Eton and Windsor. It is curious to think that, with all the efforts to maintain the pastime of coaching as a popular hobby, it was only in July of last year that any attempt was made to restore an imitation of this show of new vehicles. The one that did take place, however, on the Horse Guards Parade, was a great success, and it is to be hoped that another year's experiment will lead to a restoration of the habit annually. George the Third is as dead as Queen Anne, and so are mail-coaches, such as he provided to carry his lieges' correspondence over the country, but their memory should be kept green, and if Messrs. Vidler, the contracting coach-builders, of Millbank, who used to make his Majesty's mails, find that their occupation is gone—and they may be gone themselves, as a firm, for aught I know—it is no reason for letting a good old custom die out. There is too much matter-of-fact-ism abroad, too much realism, too much knocking-on-the-head-ism of picturesque and poetic traditions and illusions. So all efforts, I hold, which counteract this iconoclasm should be applauded, even in such prosaic things as smart coaches and coaching habits. Let their fresh paint be kept fresh, their gilt-lettering fresh gilded, and let high polish, in all senses of the word, characterize every effort which the promoters of coaching clubs make to keep them alive.

Remembering that so long ago as 1875 a proposition was made that the stage-coaches then in existence, ten in number, should parade after the fashion of the royal mails of old, one cannot help thinking that the modern coach proprietors have neglected their opportunity in not having in the meantime organized anything of the kind, if only by way of advertisement and a possible means of augmenting way-bills. The one mistake in connection

with the function last July was that the idea came too late, and the meeting was held at a time when so many people are out of town. This mistake will be rectified another year, and if the idea of holding the meet on the 1st of May is retained, there should be such a collection of Magnets, Comets, Highflyers, Tallyhos, Vivids, Lightnings, *cum multis aliis*, as has not refreshed the jaded eyes of Londoners since the days when George the Third was king.

Say what we may to a people strong in the conceit of their own epoch about the history and reminiscences of the far-off bygone times, they still cling by preference to the records of those whose memories take them back to incidents which, more or less, the present generation seem to be in touch with. The reign of George the Third holds its own in interest to *fin de siècle* youths and maidens, against the times of ancient or mediæval monarchies. The latter periods are regarded as all very well for the backgrounds of the picturesque and the romantic, but not in any way affording information of actual facts. Even if what they tell of be strictly true, the facts themselves, happening so long ago, cannot vie in value with social incidents and events in which our grandfathers and grandmothers took part. So it comes to pass, I believe, that the doings of the coaching days, for instance, prosaic as they sound, are more eagerly read than descriptions of Roman charioteering and such like vehicular performances. Right or wrong, this is the case, rail we ever so loudly against the frivolities of modern social life. To go no further back than the fall of the French Empire, we find "An Englishman in Paris" to be a more popular book at the moment I write than any in the circulating library. It is the last link which connects us with the chain of events leading directly away to the Georgian reigns and the beginning of the present, when the marvellous revolution in the coaching world was brought about by the introduction of steam.

Thackeray speaks apologetically of his hero Philip's propensity for reading the newspaper as his love for "quotidian history." "Quotidian" sounds much better than "daily," and seems to justify the common habit of the newspaper reader. It is the fashion of "superior" people to condemn a newspaper-instructed public, and it may be admitted that a great deal of time is frittered away through the means of the penny press.

But those who live in the world must be of it, and it should be remembered that the daily journal of 1893 is an epitome, up to date, of the whole world's history. We peruse as easily in our library arm-chair the account of events which happened yesterday in the Antipodes, Japan, San Francisco, China, Peru or India, as if they had taken place round the corner two or three hours since. The ways of the world in the present lie so immediately within our grasp that it is not wonderful we should cling to those which are a little bygone, but which lead up directly to the astounding results which we now enjoy, and which put us in contact with our fellow-creatures over the whole surface of the globe. To the student alone, then, it appears, will in the future be relegated such books as are called "standard." Now and again they will be taken down for reference by people who wish to go a little below the surface of the hour, but they will not be much read, and the further back the time of which they treat, the less frequently will they be removed from their shelves. This, I believe, is to what we are tending, whether for good or for evil no man knows, but here is the fact ; we are face to face with it, and must make the best of it. If we do not like it, we need not adopt the system ourselves. We are not bound to keep ourselves posted up in what is going on unless we please. It is a free country, and if a man prefers opening his Gibbon, his Tacitus, his Herodotus, at breakfast, to opening his *Times* or *Penny Pumper*, he is at perfect liberty to do so. It will be highly commendable and self-denying in him, but he must not be surprised if he finds himself a little bit out in the cold, as it were, when brought into social intercourse with his fellow-man. The pressure and responsibilities of life lie heavy on most shoulders, and he must be luckily constituted who can, in hours of relaxation, find adequate recreation in deep reading, and I am afraid, unless he has some personal advantage to serve by going in for it, he must be content to be numbered as one of a small minority. At the most, supposing him to be but a skimmer of "quotidian history," he will seek his intellectual pabulum rather among the poets and novelists than the historians and philosophers, whilst any fairly recent volume of what Mrs. Ramsbottom calls "Rum-and-essences" will be sure to engage a large share of his attention.

The Yarn of the "Umbria," December, 1892.

By EMILIA AYLMER GOWING.

COME, hear my tale, good people all, how England's lads maintain
Her law of Christmas festival and lordship o'er the main.

Three thousand miles of stormy water, we trod the Queen's
highway
From England to her mighty daughter, i' the great ship "Umbria."

From stem to stern the goodly boat bore in her lofty sides
A little English world afloat, and two fair English brides ;

And each expects to meet on land her gallant English boy,
On Christmas Eve to plight her hand with feast and bridal joy.

Not till the last December light, the death-day of the year,
To eager love's impatient sight did ship or brides appear.

The rough winds ploughed the water waste to crests of angry
foam ;
They lashed the mad sea-steeds, they raced, they met, they
charged us home !

On deck, with water to our knees, beneath the wild young moon,
Against the flood of whelming seas we fenced the warm saloon.

Closed hatches shut them safe and fast, while every sailor bold
Did battle with the bitter blast and beating surges cold.

Our hearts were light, our hands were strong, we fought and held
our way ;
Of moorings safe by Island Long we wanted but one day,

When lo ! a whisper flew abaft—our ocean-plough of steel
Had strained and flawed its labouring shaft above our shuddering
keel.

Down, hidden in the great ship's womb, our dauntless engineer
Watched face to face the creeping doom and grasped the throat
of fear.

A sudden wrench—a treacherous crack—the great ship's pulse
lay still,
And we were as the rent sea-wrack, tossed at the rude waves' will.

Then spoke our captain, brave McKay—a man of truth was he—
“Our shaft is broken, and we lie adrift upon the sea.

“Doubt not we'll find from some strong ship the towage we desire :
There is no danger.” From his lip bold courage caught like fire ;

And men and tender women, stirred to battle with the shock
Of panic, on the captain's word built firm as on a rock,

Though waters like a caldron boil beneath their berth of sleep,
While anchors drag, and floods of oil appease the roaring deep.

Our keen eyes watch the faint day-break, hailed by the signal gun,
Shot upon shot ! Aroused, awake, up crowded every one ;

And far upon the horizon's verge, a ship of hope stood clear :
By sound and sign our signals urge ;——at last, they see, they
hear !

They come ! A gallant vessel flew to meet our strong appeal :
From ship to ship our hawsers drew and held with grips of steel.

True to our trust as true love's faith, they led us all that day,
Till blinding snow and dark like death hedged in our stormy way.

We missed their light that fierce midnight, amid the wild sea's
heart,
As souls bereft, their lost delight, whom the deep grave doth part.

That night our cable snapped in twain——the great ship lay
forlorn,
A waif on the resistless main that tossed her back with scorn.

That Christmas morn the sun rose pale, and lo ! we were alone :
Our chain of hope through wave and gale dragged like a sunken
stone.

Then many gathered on their knees, a white and huddling band,
To seek His face, who holds the seas i' the hollow of His hand.

Then spoke our captain, stout McKay, "A merry Christmastide !
And happier New Year by-and-bye, each by your own fireside."

His eye was bright, for day and night, deep down above our
 keel,
Worked every man with all his might to brace the fractured
 steel.

Out of the chamber strait and long, chisel and hammer's blow,
By lusty arms struck true and strong, sound cheerly from below ;

They worked like goblins in a dream : the master engineer
Makes daring boast, "By our own steam we'll enter port, ne'er
 fear."

They kept that word with British pluck : straight for New York
 they steer,
Where thousands hail their glorious luck with shout and ringing
 cheer :

Where friends and kinsmen kindly greet, safe by the harbour side ;
Where each true lover flies to meet and clasp his wandering
 bride.

A right good tale, and joyful end ! go, tell it, far and near,
How British tars their Christmas spend and hail the glad New
 Year.

A Great Bank Robbery.

A CONFESSION.

By RICHARD WARFIELD,

Author of "MRS. BARFIELD'S JEWELS," "A BURTON CRESCENT MYSTERY," etc.

"AM I addressing Mr. Lobyer?"

I bowed and asked my visitor to take a seat.

"Ah!" he said, "I am glad I have been fortunate enough to find you in. I wish you to do something for me."

I bowed again.

"My name," he went on, "is Valentine Holloway. I have an income, but am not rich. If I chose to work, I could earn several pounds a week, but I do not like work—do you comprehend?"

"Your case is not an unusual one," I said.

He smiled. "I tell you this," he continued, "so that you may charge me as moderately as possible. Mr. Lobyer, I have a sister, a charming, graceful girl, handsome also; in a word, a feminine duplicate of myself."

"I admire your candour, Mr. Holloway. Pray go on."

"Mr. Lobyer, my sister was always impressionable, and, I regret to tell you, she has engaged herself to marry a man of whom neither her mother nor I approve. Unfortunately she has passed her twenty-first birthday, is her own mistress; so we cannot coerce her; and as persuasion is useless—for like her brother, Mr. Lobyer, she is somewhat obstinate—the only thing to do is to convince her of her lover's worthlessness."

"He is worthless, then?"

"Oh, utterly, utterly, Mr. Lobyer. He is an ex-convict—has done five years for bigamy, and several shorter terms for more or less serious offences."

I began to feel interested. "And does your sister know what manner of man her betrothed is?"

"Certainly, but he has made her believe in his thorough reformation. He has become a total abstainer, bid good-bye to all his old pals, as he calls them, and joined the Salvation Army—that is, he attends their meetings."

"May I inquire where your sister first met him?"

"Certainly, Mr. Lobyer, certainly. She is, as I told you, impressionable and, I may add, a little flighty. A short time ago she became imbued with a religious craze, and while on an errand of mercy she met this man. They conceived—so she says—a mutual love for one another. I call it an infatuation on her side. I have expostulated, argued, entreated—but without avail. She quotes scripture at me. 'There is more joy,' &c.—you know the text? Now, Mr. Lobyer, I wish you to keep watch on this man, to be with him by day and night, to know his incomings and outgoings; never leave him; let me have a minute account of his daily life."

Having given me all necessary particulars and presented me with a goodly cheque, which he left open, so that I might cash it immediately if I thought good, Mr. Valentine Holloway took his departure with a promise to return in a week.

After he had gone, I lay back in my chair and gave myself up to the profoundest meditation. My thoughts took this shape: Mr. Holloway does not desire to have this man watched for the reason he alleges. Why, then? That was a knotty point, and I could not decide it. I determined at once that, were his sister really in danger of marrying such a man as he had described her *fiancé* to be, he would not have been so cool about the matter; he would have been excited, eager. As it was, his tone and manner fell little short of the frivolous.

That evening I went myself to watch Miss Holloway's lover, for I was rather curious to see this fascinating gaol-bird, who, despite his black career, had obtained such a hold on the young lady's affections that she was willing to fly in the face of her mother and brother in order to become his wife. When I saw him I was more than ever certain that Valentine Holloway's story had been concocted to serve some end. A more miserable-looking, wretched hound of a fellow I never saw in my life. He was an ill-built, under-sized man, with a scrubby 'red' beard and white flabby face. That he had been a great drunkard was evident from his fishy eyes and shaking hands. He walked in a

peculiar, shambling manner that would make him easy to recognize at a great distance. He went, as I had been told he probably would, to a Salvation Army meeting, and then returned home; but not without many a longing glance at the various public-houses he passed. During every evening of the week he followed out the same programme.

On the Saturday I received a telegram from Mr. Holloway, saying he was confined to the house with a bad cold, and was consequently unable to keep his appointment. Would I go to dine with him on the following day (Sunday), and he would then introduce me to his mother and sister? I am by no means fond of dining out on a Sunday, preferring to spend that day entirely in my own domestic circle, but on this occasion, prompted by curiosity to see Miss Holloway, I wrote accepting the invitation. Mr. Holloway greeted me effusively on my arrival at his house, a pretty ornamental cottage in the Chiswick neighbourhood, and we adjourned into the garden for a talk and a smoke.

"The ladies," he said, "have not yet returned from church and chapel, for I don't know what special sect my sister has favoured this morning, and we shall have time for a chat before dinner. We always dine early on Sundays—it is one of my sister's fads to do so, and the mother gives in to her in everything. And now, Mr. Lobyer, what have you to tell me?"

Briefly and clearly, much to his disappointment, I told him the result of my work.

"Well," he said, "you must try again next week. He's sure to give way to temptation at last when passing a gin-shop. And if only I can once convince my sister that he drinks, she'll give him up, for she is a most rigid abstainer, and thinks me a lost soul because I indulge occasionally in a glass of wine or ale for dinner. There, I think I hear the ladies coming in. Remember, Mr. Lobyer, you are a friend of mine. I have told my mother nothing."

Mrs. Holloway was a mild, placid-looking woman of about fifty, evidently much wrapped up in her son. "How foolish of you, Val, to go into the garden. What a careless boy you are," she said after I had been introduced. "Val is far from strong, Mr. Lobyer, but he will not take care of himself."

"Where's Emily?" asked Val.

"She's upstairs taking off her hat and jacket. She will be down in a few minutes," While Mrs. Holloway was yet speaking, Emily entered the room.

"Emily," said her mother, "this is Mr. Lobyer, a friend of Val's."

I will not attempt to describe the girl. I will simply say she was the most regally magnificent woman I have ever seen. There was not a flaw in the perfect beauty of that face, not a defect in the splendid symmetry of that figure. This woman marry that wretched abortion of a man? Never! There was some deep mystery here.

During the progress of the meal the ladies were very chatty and pleasant, and entertained me with anecdotes relating to their travels in Australia, a country of which they were apparently very fond. Mr. Holloway, however, was moody and taciturn. He told me afterwards he was planning how to rupture his sister's engagement, if I failed to establish anything against him to whom she was bound.

When the ladies left us to our wine and cigars I could not help congratulating Val Holloway on his sister's appearance. He seemed much pleased.

"And to think," he said, "that she, who might have picked and chosen almost anywhere, should be bent on marrying such a man as Smedley."

"She never shall if I can prevent it," I returned warmly.

"Bravo!" cried Holloway. "I like to hear you say that."

Well, the watching Smedley went on for three or four weeks longer, but he really was either a reformed character or a great hypocrite. We could prove nothing against him. One day Mr. Holloway came to me and said, "Emily tells me Smedley is very ill and has asked me to go to see him. It's no use standing out any longer, so I shall go this evening. I should like you to accompany me if you will, for I shall feel nervous."

Accordingly I met him outside Smedley's lodgings at 7 p.m. and we went upstairs together to see the sick man. He certainly looked very ill. The chalky skin and dull eyes were far from a pleasant sight. The man seemed to me to be dying. We stayed three or four hours, the invalid begging us not to go. When we left I bade Mr. Holloway good-night and went straight home.

The next morning, while I was still at my breakfast, a telegram arrived from Mr. Holloway: "Come at once," he had wired. "Most serious complication." I hurriedly finished my meal, and set off for Waterloo Station in the swiftest hansom to be procured. Having reached it, and discovered that I had only a few minutes to wait for a train to Chiswick, I went to the bookstall to buy a morning paper. Then, ensconcing myself in a third-class compartment, I prepared for briefly scanning the news of the day. The first announcement my eye caught was sufficiently startling:

GREAT BANK ROBBERY LAST EVENING.

And then followed a long account of one of the most daring and successful robberies of modern times. I had only just finished reading it when the train stopped at Chiswick, and I had to alight. Much to my surprise, Mr. Holloway was on the platform awaiting my arrival.

"I thought you might come by this train," he said excitedly, "though I was half afraid you would not have received my telegram in time to catch it. I'm more than pleased to see you here, for you and I are the only people in the world who can get poor Smedley out of his trouble. Upon my word, it's rough on the fellow. You know I don't like him, Mr. Lobyer, but hang it all! I shall grow quite attached to the man if he is to be treated in this way; for I *do*, unwillingly enough, believe that he has really turned over a new leaf and is trying to lead a better life."

Mr. Holloway said this hurriedly, breathlessly, as if he had not a second to spare.

"I wish you would explain yourself," I said; "I have not the least notion what you are talking about."

By this time we had left the station behind us and were walking down the high road towards Mr. Holloway's house.

"Have you seen a paper this morning?" he abruptly asked. "Ah! yes, you have," and he snatched mine out of my hand.

I began to think my companion was not quite sane, and as he remained silent, apparently deeply enthralled by the

contents of the paper, I walked alongside him, waiting for him to speak.

Miss Holloway, tears coursing down her beautiful face, met us at the gate of her home. Palpably she was much distressed. "You can save him, can you not, Mr. Lobyer?" she asked in great agitation, clasping my hand and looking at me with a world of entreaty in her eyes.

"My dear young lady," I replied, "tell me what is the matter, and I will do my best."

And then Mrs. Holloway, whose calmness contrasted singularly with her children's perturbation, told me in a few words why I had been so suddenly summoned, viz., because Smedley had been arrested on the evidence of a police officer, to whom he was well known, for being concerned in the great bank robbery of which I had been reading. The policeman, it appeared, asserted that he saw him escaping over a wall in the rear of the building.

"Now, Mr. Lobyer," said Mrs. Holloway, "my son tells me that you and he were with Mr. Smedley last evening till very late, in which case you will have no difficulty in assisting Val to prove an *alibi*."

I do not know why, but that word *alibi* set me thinking, and the result of my cogitation was that it gradually began to dawn upon me that Mr. Valentine Holloway was a very clever young man, and that he had made a desperate fool of me. The thought was not elating—it was very galling. Something of what was passing through my mind must have showed itself on my face, for Mrs. Holloway said anxiously, "You will help us, for Emily's sake, will you not, Mr. Lobyer? Emily, come here, child, and speak to Mr. Lobyer yourself."

"I am sure, mamma, that Mr. Lobyer will render us every assistance in his power," the girl said, gazing at me with her tearful, pleading eyes, "for is he not Val's friend? You will, won't you, *dear* Mr. Lobyer?"

I remained silent.

At this moment Valentine Holloway, who hitherto had not spoken, strode towards me, and, laying his hand heavily on my arm, said, in a voice I hardly recognized, so different was it from his usually mellifluous tones :

"I see it is no use trying to deceive you any longer; you have guessed the truth, or something very like it — you know now what we are. I wonder you did not suspect us sooner. But never mind that. What I want to say is this: we have staked our all on this *coup*. If everything goes as we wish—and it would have done had not my mother unfortunately made use of the word *alibi*—we shall be richer than we ever dreamt of—will reward you handsomely for your trouble. Betray us, and we are ruined. Speak the truth and prove the *alibi* and you shall be rich for life. We don't desire you to sully your conscience with even the suspicion of a lie. You *know* Smedley never left his room last evening. We simply ask you to swear as much in a court of law."

"I will certainly swear that Mr. Smedley was not out of his room between the hours of seven and ten," I replied, "because I know it to be the truth; but——"

"No 'buts,' if you please, Mr. Lobbyer," interrupted Valentine Holloway, while his face underwent a change it was not pleasant to see. "Name your price, man, and you shall have it."

I mentioned a large sum.

"It shall be yours, Mr. Lobbyer; it shall be yours," he returned, nonchalantly, in his old light-hearted debonair manner, "and more than that. Pooh! it's a mere bagatelle. Emily, my pet," he went on, "should you like a run up to town this morning? Yes? Well, go and put on your hat and jacket. We'll wait here."

While the girl was gone, Holloway said: "You know M. and G., the solicitors," mentioning a firm of very high standing; "they are my lawyers. We will go there at once, and I will give them instructions in your presence about the money."

The next day I easily cleared Smedley from the charge under which he lay, received more than an ample reward, and parted with the Holloways (as I thought) for ever.

Two years passed swiftly away—two years, during which I worked hard and devoted myself to the pleasant task of money-making. At the end of that time I began to feel I needed a holiday. I had prospered on Valentine Holloway's money—prospered far beyond my highest expectations, and was now the chief of a large and steadily-increasing business. And yet I was

not happy, for I felt I had gained the money on which the ground-work of my success had been reared dishonestly, though I had received it for speaking the truth. That Valentine Holloway knew something about the robbery of the bank I could not doubt, nor could I hesitate to believe that I had been set to watch Smedley, so that I might know him well and be able to swear to him positively. I could not see how I had assisted the thieves in any way, but I certainly had, or they would not have been so eager to remunerate me for my services.

I was musing over the matter one afternoon in late July, when one of my clerks brought me in a letter which had just come by post. It was from Spain. That did not surprise me in the least, for I have more than one correspondent in that country. The writing was quite unfamiliar to me and I tore open the envelope carelessly enough. "Dear Mr. Lobbyer," ran the letter. I looked then at the signature—Emily Holloway. "Dear Mr. Lobbyer," she had written, "Val begs me to tell you that we have lately taken a charming villa in this neighbourhood, where we intend to make a long stay, and to assure you that if at any time you care to run over to spend a few weeks with us, he will be more than delighted. I am sure I need not add how heartily I echo his invitation, for I have a good memory, and I can never forget how kind you were to us in our great trouble. With kindest regards," &c.

I wrote back at once, saying I was in need of a change, and how glad I should be if they could put me up for a fortnight or so. And some days later I was again standing face to face with Valentine Holloway, his hand grasped in mine in cordial welcome.

He was not a bit altered, did not look one hour older than when we had parted. As we drove towards his home, he said: "There are some surprises in store for you, Mr. Lobbyer, but wait till after dinner and much that must have seemed mysterious to you shall be made clear. You guessed, I know, that there was something queer about us, but I'm sure you could never have imagined why it was necessary for us to engage your services." Mrs. Holloway and Emily were standing on the steps to receive us, the elder lady stately, placid, as of yore, the girl even more beautiful, if that were possible.

Val sprang lightly out of the carriage, and I followed in a more dignified manner as befitted my years.

"Charmed to see you again, Mr. Lobyer," said Mrs. Holloway, in her quiet manner, and then, turning to Emily, "Allow me to introduce you to my daughter-in-law, Mrs. Valentine Holloway."

The lovely creature held out her hand and smiled at me, and somehow I was not so surprised as I ought to have been.

"Yes," chimed in her husband, "Emily and I have been man and wife these three years past."

"Val dear, dinner is waiting, and I'm sure Mr. Lobyer must be hungry; take him up to his room. We can talk afterwards."

"Come on, old man," he said familiarly, taking my arm; "you see, although we prefer to live in Spain," and he gave a mischievous wink, "we have a great reverence for good old English customs, particularly a substantial English dinner."

On entering the dining-room a few minutes later with Val—for the Holloways were not people who stood on ceremony—where the ladies were already waiting, I found another addition to the party in the person of a gentleman whom my host introduced to me as "my brother Dick." I could barely believe my eyesight.

"Surely," I exclaimed, "I have met this gentleman before?"

"Never, never, Mr. Lobyer," cried Val Holloway, laughing merrily; "but you see the likeness, don't you?"

"The likeness?" I said; "there can be no mistake; it *must* be Smedley."

"I tell you it's my brother Dick," returned my friend. "Dick, old fellow, you're my brother, aren't you?"

"I believe so," replied Smedley's double; "but come, Val, the ladies are waiting. Let us have dinner."

It was a pleasant meal, for we were all in good spirits, and lively chatter was the order of the hour. I already was a different man from the one who had left London a few days previously, and the bright conversation and animated looks of my friends made me feel quite young again, and I soon found myself laughing more heartily than I had done for years.

"And did you really believe Val, when he told you I was in

love with Smedley?" Emily Holloway asked. "Is it possible, Mr. Lobyer, that you could be so foolish?"

"Well," I admitted, "I always had my doubts about that part of the story, but I was far from suspecting the truth. Indeed, I am not at all sure that I know it now."

"You have some idea, though, that you are hobnobbing at the present moment with a desperate gang of villains whom the English police would be very glad to get hold of, have you not?" inquired Val with a pleasant laugh. "Do you know, Mr. Lobyer, that on the morning after poor Smedley's arrest—that morning you came to me at Chiswick in answer to my telegram—you ran a very near chance of never seeing your wife and children again?"

"Don't say such horrid things, Val," Mrs. Holloway interpolated, with a serious air; "however true they may be, they are not pleasant."

"Yes," continued her son, paying little heed to the interruption, "had you finally hesitated to help poor Smedley that morning, I should have shot you dead. You would have been dangerous; you knew too much. It would not have been safe for me to let you go except as a friend."

"You make my blood run cold," I answered, and I spoke the truth.

It was, indeed, a strange sensation that crept through me, as I listened to this remarkable young man openly declare how he had once come very near the point of murdering me in cold blood. He sat precisely facing me, jolly, charming of manner, fascinating; and, evidently amused by my horrified looks, went on to tell me the whole history of the "Great Bank Robbery." Meanwhile, his wife and mother kept gazing at him continually with glances charged with love and admiration. Even the taciturn Dick seemed to be under a kind of glamour, which Val Holloway threw, apparently, over all who came in contact with him.

"You must know, Mr. Lobyer," he said, "that Smedley and I first met in a railway carriage, and I was straightway struck by his great resemblance to my dear brother. Now, at that period of our lives my brother and I were hard-working City clerks; and I had for a long time been pondering in my mind how I could improve my position and likewise decrease, or, if possible,

entirely do away with, the necessity for daily toil. I felt, and justly, I think, that I had been born for something loftier than the drudgery and routine of a merchant's office."

"For burglary, for instance," suggested Dick grimly.

"Well, Smedley and I being the only people in the compartment, we naturally fell into conversation. He was in a very low way, poor fellow, almost starving, he said, and it did not require a doctor's practised eye to see that his race was nearly run. 'Drink, sir,' he told me, 'has been my ruin. I used to be a respectable, hard-working man at one time, but I let the cursed drink get the better of me, and you see the result. I am a houseless, homeless vagabond, without a friend in the world—for my evil ways broke my wife's heart, and she pined away and died—a miserable, penniless wretch, who must die the death of a dog uncared for and unregretted. But I dare not complain, for I have only myself to thank for my present position. You see'—and though we were alone, he lowered his voice to a whisper—'drink led me into crime, and crime is the highway to prison, and—God forgive me for it!—I am better known to the police than almost any man in the country.'

"I was deeply interested in what he said, for, despite the fact that he called himself a working man, or rather acknowledged that he had been such, I was quite convinced from his manner and mode of speaking that he had really occupied a far higher position on the social ladder.

"'Where are you living now?' I asked. 'Perhaps I can be of some assistance to you.'

"'You are very kind,' he replied, and he really seemed grateful—but am I boring you, Mr. Lobyer?"

"Pray go on," I said; "I am anxious to hear the end of the story."

"Well, he gave me his address, not forgetting at the same time to tell me he was out on ticket-of-leave; and when we parted I pressed half-a-sovereign into his hand—I was always foolishly generous, Mr. Lobyer—and promised to help him in the future.

"I am not particularly brilliant, Mr. Lobyer. I lay no claim to cleverness, but I confess it did strike me that I might turn to my own advantage in some way the great similarity between my brother Dick and the ex-convict. I had no clear idea in my

head, but a kind of hazy notion that there was something to be made out of it.

"A few days later I obtained a week's leave of absence from the office on the ground of ill-health, and I never returned to my work again. Calling the same afternoon at the address received from my convict acquaintance, I found to my exceeding gladness that the Salvationists had got hold of him, and he was then attending one of their meetings. I waited till he came back, when I shook him cordially by the hand, told him how pleased I was to hear he had been converted, and that I, though not a religious man in the ordinary usage of the word, liked to do good in my own quiet way. 'My dear friend,' I said, 'the story you told me the other day has aroused my pity, and that of my sister also, to whom I told it, and we have determined, if you will abjure the drink, to help you to spend your last days in comfort. You know you have not long to live. Do, I beseech you, promise me not to touch another drop of the poison'—another glass of sherry, Mr. Lobyer? That's right, help yourself—'that has been your ruin.' And while I thus urged him, I thought to myself, 'Val Holloway, you have mistaken your calling; you ought to have been a preacher.'

"It is needless to say that Smedley accepted my offer with joy and gladness, showering down words of blessing on me, and weeping copiously—a way people have, I notice, who go in for gin-and-water and kindred liquids.

"On leaving Smedley I went to see a certain young bank clerk of my acquaintance—a frank, agreeable fellow, much addicted to theatre frequenting. On my way I purchased two tickets for a well-known house of burlesque. He was delighted to see me, for I am a universal favourite, Mr. Lobyer, and I had no difficulty in persuading him to accompany me for an evening's entertainment. We occupied two stalls, and before the second act was over I knew all I wanted, without having asked him a single question. Without being smart, I am somewhat adroit. In the evening brother Dick and I discussed our plans, with the result that I called on you next day. The rest you know: a certain bank was burgled, and Smedley—poor dear innocent Smedley—would have again gone into durance vile had it not been for my forethought. Mr. Lobyer, I need say no more. Let us drink the health of brother Dick. We are rogues, undoubtedly,

but we are not bad fellows for all that. Now, tell me, Mr. Lobbyer, do you blame us so very much after all?"

What could I say? My guilt was perhaps a tithe less great than theirs, but I was far from innocent in the matter. Nevertheless, I did not feel happy in their company, and I was glad when my fortnight's visit was at an end—glad to leave them in the full enjoyment of their ill-gotten wealth—glad to return to my home.

Val Holloway was a splendid friend, but his friendship brought me nothing but misery—gilded, it is true; for, unlike him, I had a conscience.

"The House that Jack Built."

By DARLEY DALE,

Author of "FAIR KATHERINE," "THE VILLAGE BLACKSMITH," etc.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE GHOST AGAIN.

PERRIAM'S custom in the winter was to go up to his hot-houses the last thing at night and the first thing in the morning, to see that the furnace which heated them was all right. He was often up as early as four or five in the morning, but he seldom went to bed later than eleven.

On this particular night he went up about his usual time, half-past ten, and as he went to the conservatory, which was heated by a separate stove, he noticed the family were all upstairs, having gone to bed rather earlier than usual.

On his return he remarked upon it to his wife, who was sitting up for him; Green, who slept in their cottage, having gone to bed.

"Ah! well, they had nothing to sit up for, I suppose; they are as well in bed as anywhere else for all the good they do in the world. What sort of a night is it?" said Mrs. Perriam.

"A grand night, cold, but as light as the day; you could see to read a paper by the moon."

"There is no call to read out of doors; there is plenty to see there without looking at papers. The world is a looking-glass, in which we might see ourselves if we only knew how to look into it, which few of us do. You are all for reading."

"I wonder how the master likes travelling this cold weather," said Perriam, thinking it safer to change the subject, his studious habits not meeting with much encouragement from the wife of his bosom.

"Not at all, if you ask me. We are all so many poor travellers.

We go on and on, day after day; we don't know why, and we don't know where; yet we most of us hope to get to the end of the journey some day; the sooner the better for most folks.

"I don't know so much about that; folks mostly cling to life."

"I know some folks will cling to an aching tooth sooner than have it drawn. Life is like a bad toothache; the only remedy is death. But we are afraid of the pain of death, though we pretend to believe heaven comes afterwards; so we bear the toothache as best we may."

"Well, I must be up at those fires by four or five to-morrow, so let us go to bed," said Perriam, who never encouraged his wife in her pessimistic utterances.

"We had better, if you are going to be jumping up again at that hour. I hope you won't wake."

"I am certain to wake," said Perriam, who had some cinnerarias he was anxious about in the conservatory.

"There is nothing certain in this miserable world but death," returned his wife, with which cheerful remark she led the way upstairs, her husband following her tall, thin, angular figure.

Perriam woke at four, as he had foretold, and succeeded in leaving the house without waking his wife. It was freezing now, and colder than it had been the night before, and the moon was still shining brightly over the sleeping world, which lay wrapped in a shroud of snow.

To reach the conservatory, Perriam had to pass the side-door through which Amy had passed, and, to his surprise, he noticed her footprints in the snow. They were not there when he left the conservatory at half-past ten, he was certain. Who could have been there since?

He examined the footprints carefully, suspecting at first some housemaid had been stealing out at night; but, on examination, he decided they were too small. They must be either Miss Joy's footmarks or Mrs. Lockwood's.

What could it mean?

Perhaps they had been playing another trick on Mr. Selsey, who he knew was sleeping in the haunted room. But no; the footsteps passed the conservatory, and Perriam's curiosity was

now excited so much by them that he forgot the cinnerarias and followed them on and on round the corner, down the south terrace, where they suddenly stopped, and there were several confused marks.

He stooped to examine these, when something less white than the snow, but more precious, caught his eye, and he picked up a string of pearls, one of the pearl bracelets Amy had worn and dropped as she stood hesitating to take that final plunge into the snow and eternity.

"They are Mrs. Lockwood's. I have heard Rose say she wears them nearly every night to make her arms look white," said Perriam, as he put the trinket into his pocket, now beginning to feel alarmed as well as curious.

Something wrong was going on. Mr. Lockwood was away. What was his wife doing in the garden so late at night? Perriam shook his head and muttered "he did not like it," as he proceeded to follow up the footmarks, which here turned abruptly to the right and went across the terrace.

"She has been all over my crocuses," he thought, as he followed up the track, going cautiously, for he knew how snow deceives as to distance, even when the ground is as well known as he knew this terrace-walk.

At last he reached the place where Amy had disappeared, and saw the footsteps ended abruptly and a large hole had been made in the snow-drift, which was disturbed just as it would be in its present state by some one falling into it. There was a depression between two large snow wreaths where the snow had closed over its victim. He could discover nothing. The snow had closed over its self-immolated victim, but it was clear to Perriam some one lay buried beneath it.

He did not waste any time looking at the place; he ran back to his cottage as fast as his legs could carry him, and knocking at Green's door, went in and woke him.

"Get up, Arthur, and come and help me. Something terrible has happened up at the house. I don't know for certain, but I am dreadfully afraid Mrs. Lockwood is buried in the snow. Be as quick as you can. Follow me to the foot of the south terrace. I'll go round and get some spades and meet you there."

Green wanted no second bidding to be quick; he was at the foot of the south terrace before Perriam appeared with

some spades at the top, just above the place Amy had fallen in.

"Arthur, this is the spot. We must work from below; the snow is too soft to bear us. You wait there till I come round to you," called Perriam in an undertone.

A few minutes later he was telling Green how he had discovered the catastrophe as they shovelled away the snow. It was slow work, for they were obliged to work very carefully for fear of striking Amy, supposing she were there, of which Green was very sceptical and Perriam certain.

"It ain't like her to come out on a cold night," said Green.

"Perhaps she walks in her sleep," said Perriam.

"Not she. Besides, she don't sleep in high-heeled shoes, and it is high-heel marks you saw. I expect she turned back after all. Hulloo! what is this?" said Green, as the last stroke of his spade brought a piece of cashmere embroidered with gold to view. It was the shawl Amy wore.

"It is a lady's shawl; there is some one here," said Perriam, throwing down his spade.

"It is my lady's shawl, I believe. My God! she is dead if she is here."

"God forbid, but I fear she is. We must work with our hands now; I dare not use the spade," said Perriam.

It was no easy task, for the snow from above kept falling in as they hollowed it out below with their hands, but in half-an-hour from the time Green had discovered her dress, they had made a wall of snow on which to stand so as to work from the top. They got on faster now, and at last they came to her body; she was lying on her face, the shawl still round her head, her little bare hands and white arms stretched out in front of her.

They turned her gently round with her pale beautiful face towards the sky; her eyes were closed as if in sleep, but the lovely face was cold as the snow, whose whiteness the marble brow rivalled.

"Is she dead?" said Green in an awe-struck voice.

"I fear so," said Perriam, taking off his hat and leaning over the body to try and detect the slightest sign of life.

"My God, how dreadful! So young and so beautiful," said Green.

"Maybe she is only asleep. Take yon gate off its hinges, Arthur, and let us carry her up to the house as quick as possible; every moment is precious. Pray God she is only sleeping or swooning," said Perriam, taking off his coat and rolling it up under Mrs. Lockwood's beautiful head as a pillow, while Green ran for a gate on which to place the body.

How young and fair and innocent she looked as she lay shrouded in the snow, her marble-like features upturned to the pale moon. The snow had been kind and respected her wish: she was not disfigured in the least; even in death she was not in *déshabille*. One white arm was bare, and when the thaw came two little high-heeled shoes were found, but otherwise there she lay in full dress, pale, calm, composed, beautiful, pure as the driven snow.

Awful in her purity as a sleeping child, Perriam unconsciously sunk *on* his knees by her side. Her angelic beauty, heightened by the weird light of the moon, awed him into that attitude, and though in her life-time he had never liked Amy, though he admired her beauty, as he watched her in death silent tears coursed down his rugged cheeks.

Just then The Captain set up a dismal howling from Joy's room, where he slept; the dog had evidently heard the noise of the spades and his canine instinct forboded evil.

"That will wake Miss Joy. I wish Green would be quick. If she comes downstairs and sees us it will frighten her to death," thought Perriam.

His wish was soon gratified. Green returned with a hurdle, on which they spread their coats, and then gently lifted the lifeless body, covering the beautiful face and hands with the Indian shawl. Green then took the feet, Perriam the head, and slowly and carefully they carried their sad burden towards the house.

Perriam's intention was to take the body in by the conservatory, of which he had the key, but as they passed the side door by which Amy had come out, it opened, and The Captain, barking furiously, dashed out.

"Down, sir, down; lie down," said Perriam in an undertone.

As he spoke the window of the haunted room was thrown open, and Mr. Selsey with a revolver in one hand put his head out.

"Who is there?" he demanded.

For the last hour he had been lying awake, listening to The Captain's growls, for Joy's room was above his, and ever since Perriam returned with Green, the dog had been barking at intervals.

Now Mr. Selsey looked out of the window and saw in the pale moonlight what at first sight he took for the traditional ghost; two men in their shirt-sleeves bearing not a coffin but an extemporized bier with a figure stretched apparently lifeless across it.

A second glance told him the bearers were no ghosts, but living men, and the next idea which occurred to him was Amy and Joy were playing another trick upon him, so he followed up his first question with a second before Perriam had time to answer.

"Is it you, Amy, or Joy?"

"I am here," cried Joy from inside the house as she opened wide the door, and saw in the cold wan moonlight Green and Perriam carrying what she recognized at once as Amy's figure stretched stiff and motionless on an improvised bier.

"What mischief are you up to now?" cried Mr. Selsey, stepping out of the low French window to see, while The Captain sat down behind Perriam and lifting up his voice howled piteously, divining, with the instinct of his race, that some tragedy had occurred.

"Perriam, what is it? Oh, Tom, it is Amy. Come in! Oh, what has happened?" cried Joy, shrinking back as she held wide the door for the men to enter with their sad burden.

"Great heaven! What is it, Perriam?" said Mr. Selsey in an awe-struck voice, for Joy's tone warned him it was no joking matter.

"It is Mrs. Lockwood, sir; we found her buried in the snow. Where shall we carry her?"

Perriam said "*her*" for fear of shocking Joy more than was necessary, but he felt "*it*" was the word to apply to the form they were carrying.

"Into my room; the fire is not out, and it is the nearest. We must not wake Mrs. Oxburgh if we can avoid it; the shock might kill her. Joy, darling, can you go and call Rose while we get her on to my bed?" said Mr. Selsey, divining what had happened, but anxious to spare Joy as much as possible.

"Yes," said Joy, who, terrified as she was, had the presence of mind to do as she was told.

While she was gone they laid the lifeless form on the bed, and Mr. Selsey felt the slender wrists and laid his head on the heart, which he feared had ceased to beat, but could detect no sign of life.

"Go for the nearest doctor, Green, as quickly as possible ; and, Perriam, wait here and do as I am doing while I go for brandy and mustard leaves," said Mr. Selsey, who had unfastened Amy's clothes and was now moving her arms to restore respiration if possible.

It was an hour before the doctor arrived, and during that time Joy, Rose and Mr. Selsey applied every restorative they could think of, Perriam waiting on them and rousing the other servants ; but not a sign of life rewarded them, and Mr. Selsey, though he would by no means acknowledge it, felt sure the doctor would pronounce life extinct.

"Is there no hope, Tom ? Do you think she is dead ?" said Joy tearfully, as she chafed the cold feet in her warm hands.

"We won't give up yet. I have known respiration restored after it has been suspended for some time, even an hour or two ; but, Joy, dear, I fear there is not much hope."

"What was she doing there ? How did they find her ? Do you know, Tom ?"

"Perriam saw her footmarks in the snow when he came to look to the fires, and he followed them to the place where they found her," said Mr. Selsey.

"What was she doing, I wonder ? There has been something going on all night. The Captain has been growling and barking at intervals for the last hour or two, although I whipped him at the beginning of the night for waking me up. You know he sleeps at my feet, and about midnight he jumped up suddenly and growled and barked, and I was so angry lest he should wake mother. So I got up and thrashed him, and he was quiet after that till an hour or two ago, when he heard Perriam," said Joy.

"He must have heard Amy the first time. Are you sure it was about twelve, Joy ?"

"Yes ; I looked at my watch. Poor Captain ! How I wish I had gone down to see what was the matter, instead of whipping

him! What could Amy have gone out for, I wonder?" said Joy.

Mr. Selsey did not answer. He had already guessed Amy's errand, but he did not want Joy to know the awful truth if it could be kept from her. He was spared the pain of answering by the arrival of the doctor.

A very brief examination was sufficient to satisfy the doctor that life was extinct and had been for some hours.

"How did it happen?" he asked, as Joy stood sobbing at her cousin's feet.

Mr. Selsey told him the facts as far as he knew them, and they exchanged significant glances.

"There must be an inquest; I can't sign the certificate without. The jury can come here to view the body. It is a mere form, but one we can't dispense with. Perriam and the other man will have to give their evidence. Is Mr. Lockwood here?"

"No; he is expected to-day or to-morrow, I believe."

"Well, the inquest shall be held at noon to-day, so as to get it over before he arrives, if possible. I'll see to that; and if possible we will bring it in 'Accidental Death,' or you will have trouble with the parson about the burial," whispered the doctor to Mr. Selsey.

"Mrs. Oxburgh knows nothing yet, of course?" said the doctor aloud to Joy, who shook her head in reply.

"Well, break it to her as gently as possible. Call it heart-disease. Say nothing about the details; let her think she died in her bed, in her sleep. I'll look in again about eleven and see how she bears the shock."

Joy's time was fully occupied that day, between her mother and the two motherless babes, who, happily, were too young to understand their loss; and Mr. Selsey was so busy with the inquest and sending telegrams to the squire and Amy's father that it did not occur to him to send to the station for Jack Lockwood, although he expected him to arrive that day, for he knew he could get a fly at the station.

Joy had not forgotten it, but she thought the fact of no one meeting him would in a measure prepare him for the shock that awaited him. He would guess something must have happened, although he would not guess what.

CHAPTER XXXV.

"Oh, my Amy ! shallow-hearted ;
Oh, my Amy ! mine no more."—*Tennyson.*

To be the bearer of ill news is always a thankless task, but to be the bearer of such news as Mr. Selsey had to break to Jack Lockwood is one to make a brave man tremble. Mr. Selsey, however, was accustomed to human suffering in every phase and form. He was a stranger to no sort of sorrow or misery. His work in the London slums had made him acquainted with grief of every kind.

In the present instance he shrewdly suspected the shock would be greater than the grief, when the first bitterness was past. But this was merely suspicion ; he could not act upon it. While he was turning about in his mind what to say, Jack unconsciously helped him.

"Has anything happened to Mrs. Oxburgh ?" he asked.

"No ; she is very well, considering the terrible shock we have all had. My dear Lockwood, I grieve to say it is your poor wife who is the cause of our grief."

"My wife ! To what do you allude ? Has she acknowledged her crime ?" said Lockwood haughtily.

"Hush, Jack ! I know nothing of any crime. Amy is dead. *De mortuis nil nisi bonum*," said Mr. Selsey, feeling he was taking part in some tragedy, part of the plot of which was still a mystery to him.

"Dead !" exclaimed Jack in a horror-stricken tone. "Dead ! How ? When ? Where ?"

"She was found buried in the snow on the south terrace early this morning by Perriam and Green," said Mr. Selsey.

"But how did she get there ? Who was with her ?"

"No one. She went to bed as usual last night, apparently in her usual health and spirits. This morning Perriam noticed foot-steps in the snow when he came to see to the fires, and following them up, found some one was buried in the drift just below the house. He went for Green, and they dug out poor Amy's body. Life had been extinct some hours, the doctor said. That is all I know, except Joy has found a letter in her room for you.

But if I may advise, you will not read it till you have had something to take after your journey."

Jack sank into the nearest chair, unable to realize what had happened. Amy dead! Amy, whom he had left so full of life and health and beauty!

Amy, with whom, till he heard her end, he had been so angry that he felt he could never forgive her!

There was no anger in his breast now. In the face of this awful news he forgot what before had seemed an unbearable trial. No; he was not angry; he was stunned, shocked, horrified, incredulous. He could not believe it.

Mr. Selsey left him alone. He would not intrude on his sorrow; so he too sat silent, till at length Jack rose and said:

"I should like to see her."

"She is in this room; we carried her there in the first instance, and as the inquest was held to-day, it was more convenient," said Mr. Selsey, leading the way to the haunted chamber.

There on the bed, waiting for her coffin, lay Amy, just as they had found her, in her black velvet dress, a string of pearls round her white throat and one slender wrist; her little hands were folded meekly over her bosom; a lace handkerchief was thrown over her face; great wax candles at the foot of the bed in huge silver candlesticks cast a soft light on the beautiful face, smiling as it was even in death.

Jack went forward and lifted the lace handkerchief, and as he sunk on his knees by the side of the bed, Mr. Selsey gently closed the door and left him alone with his dead.

What passed through his mind in that half-hour who shall say?

She had sinned against him, but that sin was a trifle compared to this sin against God. Poor, foolish, cowardly child. Would the All-merciful have mercy on her?

Did Jack blame himself in any way?

We cannot tell. All we know is, when at length he rejoined Mr. Selsey in the dining-room there were traces of tears on his pale face, but no sign of anger; he was subdued and awe-stricken, and Mr. Selsey knew he guessed his wife's death was no accident.

"You said there was an inquest. What was the verdict?"

"An open verdict."

"And that means——"

"Merely that the jury could not decide the cause of death."

"And would not agree to bring it in accidental. I suppose they were right. I fear it was not an accident."

"Your letter may throw some light on it; the verdict will prevent any trouble about the funeral. Had it been otherwise there might have been some difficulty, though I have no scruple in reading the whole of the service. Poor child, she knew not what she did, and God is very merciful. Far be it from us sinful men to judge her. Did she walk in her sleep?"

"No; I never heard of it if she did. I should like to have the letter, and then I will go to my room until dinner," said Lockwood.

Mr. Selsey fetched the letter, and Jack went upstairs to his room, every nook and corner of which reminded him of his wife, though Joy and Rose had put everything which belonged to her out of sight, regretting that as Felix and Amy's parents were both expected that day or the next, there was no other available room.

He sat down unwillingly in the very chair in which Amy had written the letter he now opened, and read as follows:

"11 p.m. Oxburgh Hall.

"My own! My love! My husband!

"How you will open your eyes when you read this; those dear eyes of yours which I shall never see again. Yes, it is true. I love you. I will let myself go—I love you wildly, madly, yes, wickedly, for I am going to die rather than face your scorn and anger. I did not love you when I married you, not a scrap; I married you out of spite. I was a selfish little toad then; I loved no one but myself, and I could not bear to see another woman loved. I knew you loved Joy. I deceived you cruelly about her; there was no excuse for me. But I would do it again if the time came over again, because now I love you; there would be some excuse for me now. No, I do not repent of that, I can't; I could never bear to see you married to any one else. But I do repent of the rest, my extravagance, my folly, my senseless stupidity in altering that cheque. I would never have done it had I known the money was not yours; and I truly meant to repay it. My father and Uncle John or Aunt Sophy

would have helped me. I did it to hide my extravagance from you ; I was afraid of you. My love was not perfect, you see, for I was afraid of you. I don't think I should have loved you if I had not feared you. When did I begin to love you ? In that cave when you risked your life to save mine. Oh ! Jack ! Jack ! Jack ! my own Jack—my love, my husband, who loves me not ; would to God we had died there. Better for you, perhaps ; better certainly for me—better one thousand times for me. Yet I think God will be merciful to me. I am not religious. I know nothing about religion, but I have heard there is such a thing as atonement and reparation. I am going to make atonement, to do reparation. I am going to die for your sake and my rival's. I was cruel to Joy ; I ask her forgiveness. Yes, I am going to die ; I shall lie down and die in the snow. I always loved the snow, the beautiful soft white snow ; and then you will marry Joy ; you always loved Joy. You will be happy then, and I shall be at rest. I have sinned grievously against you ; I will make atonement, and then, perhaps, when you look at my face, cold, yes, and beautiful—for I am beautiful, beautiful in death ; the snow, I know, will be kind to me, it won't disfigure me—then you will forgive me, and you will kiss me once on the lips and say, 'I forgive you,' won't you ? I think you will not refuse to do this, stern and cold as you have been to me. Oh, God ! how I love you. Kiss me that once, and I will rest in peace.

"One more request and I have done. Tell Felix to pray for me, to have masses said for me ; he loved me, he will do it. I should not wonder if he became a priest and said mass for me often and often himself. Don't forget this ; it is my dying wish. As I said before, I am not religious ; I should not dare to die if I were, but Felix is, and I believe if any religion is true, the Catholic is the true one. Perhaps I might have been better had I been a Catholic. Felix is so good, so very good. I know no one so good as Felix. I never loved him. I used to think I did once, a long time ago ; but I did not know what love was then. Now I do, and it is both heaven and hell.

"Good-bye, Jack. I have kissed the children. Don't tell them it was not an accident. Bury me as I am.

"Your true and loving wife,

"AMY."

Three times Jack read the beautifully-written letter—written hastily, it was clear ; written almost with her life-blood and stained in one place with a great tear. Then he kissed it and folding it up, put it into his pocket-book, and then he went downstairs to the room Amy was lying in, and lifting the handkerchief from her face, bent and kissed her cold lips, and he fancied they parted and smiled at him.

Poor little Amy ! Poor beautiful, foolish child ! Poor broken-hearted wife !

His heart was full of tenderness towards her as he gazed on her beautiful features, cold and still in death, and as he gazed on her, it was not Amy whom he blamed. He remembered only that she had loved him, tardily, it was true, but deeply for all that ; he remembered she had been true to him as a wife, for she was pure as the snow that shrouded her. She had had many lovers, many temptations, but of this he was sure, never had she sullied her pure soul with one thought of any other man.

He forgot her faults now she lay still in death ; he remembered only her virtues and his own shortcomings. Before God was he not, perhaps, guiltier than Amy ? He could not lay the flattering unction to his soul that he had been true to her in thought as well as in deed ; he had striven against his love for Joy, but his conscience just now, morbidly sensitive, told him he had not always striven as hard as he might have done.

Then, too, he had not loved her ; he had sworn to do so at the altar, but he had not done so ; he had been, as she said, stern and cold to her ; he had made her fear him ; he had sinned against Love.

Would the God of Love forgive him, and yet refuse to pardon her ?

He could not believe it possible ; if her sins were unpardonable, much more were his, he reasoned ; but he was not in a fit state to reason or to judge himself ; his judgment was warped by the fire of her love ; he was biassed against himself by his great pity for her.

He stooped and kissed her more than once, and stood for a long while gazing on the beautiful marble-like face, angelic in its beauty.

All her wishes should be attended to ; she should be buried just as she was, the pearls on her throat and wrist ; the string

Perriam had found should be tied round Gladys' neck ; she should wear it in memory of her beautiful young mother.

Felix should have her message ; masses should be said for her since it was her dying wish. He failed to see that it could do her any good, but she wished it, so it should be done.

And the children should never know her death was not an accident.

He would do all in his power to fulfil her wishes. Alas ! there was so little left for him to do.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

IS SHORT AND SERIOUS.

THE squire and Felix knew of poor Amy's death several hours before her husband was aware of it, for one of Mr. Selsey's first actions, as soon as it was daylight, was to send a telegram to Jersey, in case Mr. Oxburgh should still be in the island.

As a matter of fact, he and Felix were at breakfast when the message arrived, hesitating as to whether they should leave that day by the Weymouth boat or not.

The message decided the question.

"Great heaven, Felix ! here is awful news. It is from Selsey, who is at Oxburgh—'Amy died suddenly last night ; return immediately !'" exclaimed the squire, handing the telegram to his son.

"Amy ! Oh, father ! it can't be true," cried Felix, leaving his breakfast untouched.

"It must be true, my boy. Felix, Felix, I fear something very terrible has happened. Poor, poor Amy. It seems incredible."

"Jack can hardly have arrived yet, even if he travelled all night, which he did not mean to do when he left," said Felix.

"Poor fellow. It will be an awful shock to him, coming at this unfortunate time. Poor little Amy ! Felix, we must catch this boat. Is it possible ?"

"Oh, yes. We can do it easily. Oh, father, excuse me for a few minutes ; I can hardly bear it. Get everything ready, will you ?" said Felix, leaving the room.

"Poor old Felix! He always loved her. No one will grieve so sincerely for her as he will," said the squire, as he put some breakfast in the fender to keep warm for Felix, and then ordered the luggage to be brought down and a fly sent for.

He was very much shocked; but, nevertheless, he had no idea of starting on a long journey with an empty stomach; but he shook his handsome head again and again as he ate his hurried breakfast.

They caught the boat; but Felix only spoke once on their way to the pier, to say he had sent the telegram up to Miss Keppel, with a few lines telling her they were leaving at once in consequence; and his father saw the blow was a terrible one to him.

They had a miserable journey, cold and foggy, though calm at sea; foggier on land by rail from Weymouth to London, foggiest of all in London, which they reached at eight in the morning, to find it dark as night, a black fog like a huge pall hanging over the city.

"Suicidal weather," muttered the squire.

"Perhaps it was not suicide after all," said Felix, who was thinking of Amy.

"True, true. I was only speaking of the weather," said the squire, as after breakfasting by gas-light, they drove with difficulty across the fog-laden streets to the Great Eastern Railway.

As they left London behind them, the atmosphere grew less dense, but even in the country there was a thick white fog, depressing enough under any circumstances, doubly so to them who were returning to so sad a household.

Somewhat to their surprise they found Joy in the carriage which met them, but she looked so sad and ill that the squire was quite shocked.

"I thought the air would do me good. I hope it was not wrong of me to come; but Tom made me, and I was glad to get out. The house is so terribly quiet," said Joy.

"How is your mother?"

"Pretty well. She knows nothing; she thinks it was heart-disease, but it was an accident of some kind. She was found buried in the snow at the bottom of the south terrace," said Joy.

"You don't say so. And Lockwood, how is he?" asked the squire.

"Terribly cut up. He looks years older. He is dreadfully depressed, and feels it acutely. He takes no interest in anything ; not even in the children," said Joy.

"It must be an awful shock to him," said Felix.

"It was to all of us. Poor Amy," said Joy, leaning back against her father and bursting into tears.

But the tears were not all for Amy, though Joy did not know it. She was overwrought partly by the tragedy which had just occurred, partly by other more personal reasons, which she had not time nor inclination to analyze.

Jack had scarcely spoken to her since his return. He avoided her, and though she knew it was only natural and right that he should do so, it hurt her.

"When is the funeral ?" asked the squire when Joy recovered herself.

"On Tuesday. Uncle George and Aunt Amy are expected to-day, if he can get any one to take his duty to-morrow," said Joy.

"Shall we be able to see her ?" asked Felix.

"Oh yes, she is not changed at all ; she looks so beautiful ; she is in her dinner-dress, just as she was found," said Joy, as the carriage stopped.

Later that evening Jack took Felix into the room where his dead wife lay, and there in her presence delivered her message.

"It shall be done," said Felix, and then after a pause he added, "I should like to watch here to-night ; will you permit me ?"

"Certainly," said Jack, and when he came into the room at midnight, he found a large crucifix was standing on a table at the foot of the bed between the candles, and before it knelt Felix, reciting the office for the dead.

All through that night, which was destined to be a turning point in his life, he knelt there, until at five o'clock in the morning the squire came to take his place, in order that he might get a few hours' rest before mass, for it was Sunday morning.

But Felix did not go to bed, he went to the private chapel, and there, prostrate before the altar where the lamp burnt dimly, he offered his life to Almighty God to serve Him as a priest.

It was no sudden resolution, for the last few years he had felt God was calling him nearer to Himself; the life he had chosen for himself, noble as it was, did not satisfy him; he longed to do more for the miserable beings he worked among than relieve their bodily wants; he longed to minister to their souls also.

Until that night, however, the voice of God had never definitely called him to the altar; his path had hitherto not been clearly defined; on the one hand there was the priesthood, to which he felt himself strongly attached, on the other there was his duty to his father.

Oxburgh could never go to a Protestant, he was the only son, and if he became a priest it must pass out of the family, unless either of his sisters should become a Catholic.

Mrs. Selsey never would, of that he felt sure, and Joy had shown no tendency to do so hitherto; was it then his duty to marry and keep Oxburgh in the family?

This had hitherto been his doubt; but as he knelt in Amy's presence that night, he felt that he could never marry; all the human love he had had to give had been given to her, he could never call any other woman wife. And then her dying request that he would have masses said often for her soul—how could he grant that better than becoming a priest and saying mass himself frequently for her?

Poor sinful foolish child; she little knew when she took that fatal plunge into eternity how much she needed the help she had asked for. Perhaps if he offered his life for her soul, Almighty God, who is a merciful Father as well as a strict Judge, would accept the sacrifice.

And when the chaplain came at seven he found Felix still before the altar; he rose when he heard the door open, and going into the confessional told the priest all that was in his heart.

By half-past seven, the two or three Catholics who lived in the village came in for confession and communion, which was given at eight, mass not being said till ten, and Felix went away to have a bath and shave.

Breakfast was at nine, but it was a sad meal, for Amy's father, who was heartbroken at the loss of his daughter, was present; Jack sat stern and silent, Joy was in tears, and the only attempt

at conversation was made by Mr. Selsey and the squire, so that it was a relief to every one when the meal was over.

After breakfast, Felix followed his father to the library to tell him of his decision ; he feared it would be a blow to the squire, who he knew was anxious he should marry, but he hoped, when he heard his reasons, he would, for Amy's sake, if for no higher motive, raise no objection.

The squire said very little at the time, but after mass was over, he went across to Felix, who was kneeling at his *prie-dieu*, tasting the joy which often follows in the wake of a great act of self-renunciation, and kissing him said :

"God bless you, my boy ; you have chosen the better part ; far be it from me to dissuade you."

But for all that it was a great trial to Mr. Oxburgh ; he would fain have seen Felix happily married, with a son to succeed him before he went to his own rest ; now the old Hall must go to the nearest Catholic relation, a distant cousin whom he personally disliked, unless Joy or Frances became Catholics.

During the day, while he was watching Joy play with poor Amy's children while Rose was out, an idea occurred to him. Amy's boy was a nearer relation than the Catholic cousin ; why not adopt the boy if Jack would consent, bring him up a Catholic and make him the heir ?

It must be done conditionally, for there was always the hope Joy or Frances might be converted, in which case the estate would go to them and their heirs if Catholics ; but he would promise in that case to provide for the boy handsomely.

Would Lockwood consent ?

That was the question, and the squire, who was an impetuous man, would fain have consulted him there and then, but Felix persuaded him to wait until after the funeral, urging that Mr. Keppel would be certain to raise objections if he were in the house at the time, for he was a bigoted Protestant.

As it was, they had some trouble with him, to allow them to let Amy's coffin be carried into the chapel until the funeral, but Jack wished this to be done as soon as Felix proposed it.

It was not until after the funeral that the change in Felix's plans for the future was made known to the rest of the family. To all but Jack Lockwood it seemed a great pity, for no Protestant mind could understand the value of the sacrifice he was making.

All they saw was a fine old place passing out of the direct line to a distant member of the family, and the lawful heir, whose duty in their opinion was to marry and succeed his father, sacrificing all this for the sake of becoming a priest.

They did not know that Felix yearned to hear that song of songs which is as "the voice of many waters and as the sound of harpers harping upon their harps," and knew that unless in the great Hereafter he was among the hundred and forty-four thousand of those who alone are worthy to say that song, which it is ecstasy to sing, heaven itself would not be heaven to him.

Jack Lockwood did not know this, but he knew it had been his wife's dying wish that Felix should become a priest, and he was glad for her sake of his decision.

The squire said nothing about adopting Amy's boy until Jack, who left Oxburgh for a month after the funeral, returned and spoke of taking the children and Rose to Jersey. Then he proposed to adopt the child on condition that he was brought up a Catholic, and Jack, who was only too glad to be relieved of one child, agreed, and went back to Jersey with Green, Rose and Gladys, leaving the baby-boy with Joy and her father.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE MAIDEN ALL FORLORN.

JOY was miserable.

Amy's death was a double shock to her; it affected her as it did every one else in the house as a terrible tragedy; but besides this it revealed to her that she still loved but one man in the world, and that was not the man to whom she was engaged, but Jack Lockwood.

So soon as she realized that Amy's death made Jack a free man, and made it also no longer a sin for her to love him, the old love, which had only been stifled and never was dead, welled up in her heart stronger than ever, and Joy knew Jack was for her the only man the world contained. He might never be hers; in all probability he never would be, for he had been cold as ice to her ever since Amy's death, but she could never be any one else's.

And she was engaged to Major Graham! What was she to do?

Must she break off her engagement ?

What reason could she assign for such conduct ? Must she write to Major Graham and say, " I cannot marry you, because I find I love a man who does not care a straw for me, who avoids me in every way, and who is heart-broken at the death of his wife ? "

No, she could not do this.

What should she do, then ?

Marry Major Graham ? She could not do that, that also was quite clear, though the rest was clouded.

What, then, was she to do ?

As far as Major Graham was concerned, she did nothing ; and perhaps the knowledge that she ought to do something helped to make her feel so unhappy. It might have contributed to it, but truth to tell, Joy thought but little of Major Graham. She was haunted night and day by the vision of a tall thin man, pale as a ghost now, with a cold stern face and manner, who when he was at Oxburgh had since Amy's death scarcely spoken to her ; a man who was suffering acutely ; a man whom she longed to comfort, but to whom she dared not express her sympathy.

For the first week after Amy's death Joy had not been surprised at Jack's coldness ; it was only natural that he should be silent and desire to be alone with his sorrow. But when after a month's absence he returned for a short visit, he was less depressed ; nevertheless to her he was cold as ice ; he avoided her, and was visibly annoyed when Gladys insisted on her joining in their games.

Gladys was a great comfort to her father now. He spent a great deal of time with her, and Joy shrewdly suspected that if he had not desired to avoid coming in contact with her, he would have kept the child continually with him.

It was during this visit that it was arranged the boy should remain at Oxburgh, an arrangement which pleased Joy exceedingly, for she dreaded parting with Gladys, and she felt the child would be a strong link between Jack and Oxburgh ; they could never lose sight of him so long as his son lived with them. He would be forced to visit them sometimes for the child's sake.

" Aunt Joy come too," said Gladys, as Joy stood in the hall seeing them off on the morning of Jack's departure for Jersey.

"No, darling, Aunt Joy can't come. Gladys is going with daddy," said Joy, pale and sorrowful, as the child clung to her neck.

"Must come too ; me can't go wifout her," said Gladys beginning to cry.

"Aunt Joy must stay and take care of baby," said Joy, as Jack stood looking on silently.

"We all come, baby and Aunt Joy," said Gladys sobbing.

"Won't Gladys come with father?" said Jack as Joy held the child to him.

"Yes, me go with daddy, but me want Aunt Joy too," sobbed Gladys, pillowing her head against her father, to the great detriment of her great granny-bonnet, and Joy thought it wiser to run away and put an end to an awkward scene.

When Gladys was gone Joy devoted herself to the boy ; he slept in her room, and in playing with him and caring for him she forgot some of her own sorrow.

As the spring came Joy grew so pale and careworn that the squire, who fancied she was perhaps fretting for Major Graham, wrote to him and invited him to come to Oxburgh for Easter, saying Joy was not well, and did not seem to get over the shock her cousin's death had caused them all.

The news of Major Graham's expected arrival did not tend to improve Joy's health or her spirits. She dreaded it ; she could not bear to think she belonged to him, that he had the right to kiss her, when all the time she knew her heart belonged to Jack Lockwood, although she was no longer anything to him.

She racked her brains in vain for some excuse to avoid being at home when her *fiancé* came, but unless she feigned illness or wrote and told him the engagement must be broken off, she saw no way out of the difficulty.

So Major Graham arrived and found Joy pale and sad and out of spirits, and before he had been twenty-four hours in the house he saw she was altered in every way since his last visit. She was sweet and gentle with him, but she was cold in spite of herself, and was ill at ease in his society ; and although the squire attributed the change in her to Amy's sad death, a lover's instinct told Major Graham this was not sufficient to account for her shyness and reserve with him, to say nothing of her evident suffering.

One day Major Graham purposely mentioned Jack Lockwood, and watched Joy's face while he did so.

"I have rarely seen a man so altered," he said.

"He was dreadfully cut up," said Joy, colouring faintly.

"He is not only cut up, he has become morose; he goes nowhere unless occasionally to dine with Miss Keppel; and he apparently takes no interest in any one or anything except his little girl, to whom he is devoted."

"It is only three months since Amy's death," said Joy, who was endeavouring to hide her face from his scrutiny.

He was driving her in a dog-cart when this conversation took place, but he saw the bright red blood was mantling her half-averted cheek, and he feared his suspicions as to the cause of the change in her were only too well founded.

"True, but for a man who I never thought was in love with his wife, he is strangely altered. He seems to have lost all his youth, and he is becoming very cynical; it strikes me sometimes that he blames himself for what occurred," said Major Graham, looking at Joy's profile, from which the colour had now ebbed away, leaving her pale as a white rose.

"If he does, he is wrong; no one was to blame except poor Amy," said Joy, and his quick ears detected a ring of hardness in her tone.

"Don't let us judge her, poor child; we don't know what led her to such measures," said Graham gently.

"I don't wish to judge her, but others who have had more to suffer have borne their trials. As Mrs. Perriam said the other day, if every one who was miserable were to lie down and die, there would soon be no one left to live."

"Mrs. Perriam is a pessimist; I hope you won't become one of her disciples."

"I hope not, but it is a miserable world," said Joy, and after that there was not much conversation, for they were both absorbed in their own thoughts.

That evening Joy's conscience smote her when she thought over this conversation. She had been harsh to poor Amy; Major Graham was quite right, and she had been unkind to him. No wonder he was hurt at her conduct, but, oh! how was she to help it?

She was sitting alone in the drawing-room thinking this,

while her father and Major Graham were having a cigar, when the door opened and the latter walked in.

Joy was in black, a bunch of primroses at her breast and some amber beads round her white neck and bare arms alone relieving the sombreness. It suited her ; her auburn hair looked lighter, her complexion fairer by contrast with the black tulle folds which draped her pretty figure and fell in soft draperies to her feet. She was slightly flushed, and a great tear or two, which had dropped unbidden from her eyes, had left her long eyelashes wet.

Major Graham thought he had never seen her look lovelier than she did now as she smiled up at him.

"I am glad you have come ; I wanted to speak to you," said Joy

"I have something to say to you, too, but first let me hear what you have to tell me," said Major Graham, seating himself on the sofa beside her.

"Nothing of any consequence, only that I was cross and horrid this afternoon and I am sorry," said Joy as he drew her close to him.

"You are never cross, and you could not be 'horrid,' as you call it, if you tried ; you were not happy, I know, and that is what I want to speak to you about. What is troubling you, my love ?"

For answer, Joy buried her head in his breast and burst into a passion of weeping, the violence of which surprised him.

"Joy, Joy, what is it, my beloved ? Tell me everything, my little one, and let us see what can be done," whispered Graham as he folded her in his arms.

But for some minutes Joy could not speak ; the pent-up tears would flow and the passionate sobs came thick and fast.

"I am so miserable," said Joy at last

"Why ? What makes my Joy so unhappy ?"

"I can't tell you. I can't tell any one," said Joy.

"Not even me ?"

"No, that is the worst of it," sobbed Joy.

"Joy, I think I can guess what it is that makes you unhappy. We are all selfish creatures, and when I heard of your cousin's death, I am ashamed to say, almost my first thought was that it would affect my dearest hopes. It has done so, hasn't it ?" said Graham with some difficulty.

Joy did not answer, she only struggled to get free.

"Answer me, dearest. I can bear to hear, but I cannot bear to be kept in suspense!"

"Yes, but oh! forgive me, Edward; you would if you knew all. I ought never to have accepted you; I know it now for I—I cannot keep my promise."

"And it is that which makes you miserable, is it?"

"Partly, not altogether."

They were sitting hand-in-hand now, Joy's long lashes veiling her down-cast eyes, a little sob rising every now and then, which would not be checked; he gazing sadly but tenderly at her, knowing it was the last time he would ever do so.

"Joy," he said, at last, as he looked at the sweet, sad young face, "I think if this had not happened I might have won your love, at least I would have done my utmost to have made you happy; but Mrs. Lockwood's death has altered the circumstances, as I feared it might. I do not think now I could ever make you happy; at any rate, I believe it would be better for us to break off our engagement for the present. It may be we are destined yet to be man and wife, God only knows. I shall always love you; I love you now so well that I am willing to give you up if it will make you one jot happier."

"I shall never be happy again," said Joy with the selfishness of youth.

"Yes, I think and hope and pray you will, even though it may not be given to me to make you so. Good-bye, sweetheart," he said, rising and folding her once more in a last embrace.

"Oh, forgive me for the pain I have given you," whispered Joy.

"I have nothing to forgive, dearest; you have been the victim of circumstances beyond your control. Good-bye," and the next minute Joy was alone, and Major Graham went back to the squire to tell him what had occurred.

He was gone, leaving Joy with the consciousness that she had sent away a man who loved her so well that he was willing to give her up. He had given her a practical definition of love—of the highest love there is—sacrifice. True love is sacrifice. He loved her deeply, truly, better than he loved himself. There was not a touch of selfishness in his love. He loved her as it is not given to many men to love, nor to many women to be loved, and she had cast away his love.

No wonder that she felt doubly forlorn when he was gone. In truth, she was never so near loving him as that evening when she said good-bye to him.

He left Oxburgh before she was up the next day, and she found, on coming down to breakfast, she was alone with her father, and the meeting she was dreading was thus anticipated by an hour.

Joy felt very nervous and uncomfortable ; nevertheless, a weight seemed to have been lifted from her mind, and she had slept better than she had done for weeks.

The squire looked grave, but Joy knew by his manner of greeting her he was not angry. And again Major Graham's unselfishness struck her forcibly. Evidently he had made the best of her conduct in his interview with her father.

"Well, Joy, so you have dismissed Graham, I hear," said the squire when the servant was gone out of the room.

"Yes, father," said Joy in a low voice, colouring painfully.

"Poor fellow ; I am sorry for him. He is an excellent man, is Graham—a little too old for you, perhaps, as I always told your mother, but you might have done worse."

"I think I have done about as badly as I could," said Joy bitterly.

"I don't know about that. If you don't love Graham, you are quite right not to marry him, my dear child. He does not blame you in the least for what has occurred ; nor do I."

"I blame myself, though. I ought not to have accepted him, but I did it for the best," said Joy, bursting into tears.

"There, there, my dear child, don't cry. It is no fault of yours. You must be patient, Joy ; it will all come right some day, perhaps," said the squire, rising and patting Joy's bent head affectionately.

"I shall never, never marry," sobbed Joy.

"Well, never mind if you don't. Marriage is not the only thing in life worth having, nor the end for which we are sent here. I could not spare you just yet, Joy, and as for the boy, why, he would never get on without you. How he grows, to be sure ! This air seems to suit him much better than Jersey," said Mr. Oxburgh.

Once launched on the perfections of this boy, the squire, who was devoted to the child, would run on for any length of time,

Joy knew, and under cover of it, she was able to recover herself.

The truth was, Mr. Oxburgh would far rather Joy married Mr. Lockwood than Major Graham, and he privately thought she would eventually do so. It would simplify matters very much if she did. It would not seem that Oxburgh was going out of the family if it went to Joy's step-son, who, the squire argued, would be almost like her own child, since she was now far more devoted to him than his own mother had been.

But the squire was reckoning without his host, and was neither aware of the change in Jack's manner to Joy, nor of his dead wife's last letter, which had wrought that change. All the squire thought was that it was early days yet for anything to be said or done in the matter. Meanwhile, he was not altogether sorry the engagement with Major Graham was at an end, though he sympathized with him.

(To be concluded.)

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A Third Person.

By B. M. CROKER,

Author of "PROPER PRIDE," "DIANA BARRINGTON," "TWO MASTERS,"
"INTERFERENCE," "A FAMILY LIKENESS," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXIX.

FIRST ON THE LIST.

ROGER HOPE had quitted No. 15 on a bitter winter's night, and he now returned to it, on a blazing August afternoon, but, save for the difference in seasons, it was absolutely unchanged. There was the hat brush in its little nook in the hall, and Annie's green linnet chirruping on the first landing. In the drawing-room, he found his aunt sitting beside the open window, and William the Conqueror lolling on the sill—instead of both being in front of the fire as formerly. The chairs, with their fat silk cushions, the palms, Indian curiosities, and big photograph screens, were all apparently just as he had left them. He could not have explained the fact, or offered any sane reason, but he had quite a sentimental affection for his aunt's pretty drawing-room. Mrs. Baggot sprang up to meet him with the agility of sixteen, and, throwing her arms round his neck, said :

"Last time, I kissed you for your mother, Roger—like the old song. *Now* I kiss you for yourself. How are you, my dear boy?"

"Oh, nearly all right; but they thought I had better get off before the rains, on account of this fever I've had hanging about me. The regiment comes home this trooping season, you know."

"I am glad to hear it. I cannot compliment you on your looks. Roger, you are a perfect wreck."

"Well, I can compliment you, Aunt Polly. You are looking not one hour older, or a day over forty."

"You are a humbug. I am getting as wrinkled as a piece of wash-leather. But come along and sit down here. I suppose you have heard our grand piece of news?"

"Yes; about Clara and the general."

"They say one wedding makes another, and I'm really very uneasy about Annie and Mr. Friar. You remember him—the emaciated-looking curate? But if Annie leaves me, I shall have to get married myself," and she laughed. "When did you arrive?"

"The day before yesterday, and I thought I'd just run down and see how you were all getting on. You know, to a man home from India, a four hours' journey is no more than crossing a road."

"My dear boy, pray make no apologies. When you were home before, you came to see me last of all, and now I am first on the list; I am only too glad to think you like us. By the way, who told you about Clara?"

"Miss Yaldwin. I travelled part of the way with her."

"Oh, that was quite a pleasant little coincidence. She is still Miss Yaldwin, you see. Are you not glad of that?"

"I don't know, Aunt Polly. Why should I be glad?"

"You used to like her so much—she is quite one of the prettiest girls I have ever seen."

"Yes, but—

'If she be not fair for me,
What care I how fair she be?'"

"Oh, is that it?" surveying him critically; "but why should she not be fair for you?"

"I don't know."

"Roger! Upon my word—you and your 'don't know!' I could shake you. Have you ever asked her?"

"Yes—I wrote," he admitted gloomily.

"And what was your answer?"

"None—neither 'yes' nor 'no.'"

"And you were afraid to take silence for consent, eh? It's my opinion she never got it," she added cheerfully.

"That may be—I sent it in an unusual fashion."

"Why in the world did you not speak to her? I always think it so cowardly to write. A girl prefers being asked—please to remember that in future."

"That's all very fine, Aunt Polly ; but when I was here last, I never had a chance of speaking to her."

The old lady pondered for a moment, smiled slightly, and then said :

"Well, I will guarantee you plenty of opportunities *now*. Try again, Roger ; you will find that it will all come right. Dear me, if it comes off, how pleased I shall be, and so will Annie. As for Clara, she will be your grandmother-in-law. Oh dear, dear me !" bursting with peals of laughter, and throwing herself back in her chair, "that will be too, too funny. Clara is lunching out to-day," she gasped, when she had recovered ; "she is busy about her *trousseau*."

"I suppose you will be forced to part with him," pointing to where William lay outstretched and asleep ; "but, at any rate, you will have the satisfaction of knowing, that he is only next door, and that you can still supply him with canaries."

"Oh, you don't know, of course, that the general is going to sell the lease of No. 13 and take a house in town ; Clara thinks Morpington too dull, and the society much too ancient and decrepit."

"Does she, indeed ? Well, Annie," to his cousin, "here I am again, you see," as Miss Baggot entered.

He kissed her this time, for he liked old Annie, as he called her, and Annie's sallow face became of a sort of deep fawn.

Lunch was now announced, and as they sat at the round table, Mrs. Baggot, who was brimming over with good spirits, exclaimed :

"Well, I declare ; this *is* nice ; just the three of us here, and quite like old times."

It seemed to Roger that his aunt and Annie were enacting the part of mice, in the absence of the cat, and that the approaching departure of Clara would not be harrowing to their feelings. Annie, who always showed her good-will by pressing dainties on her friends, and who was secretly concerned to see her cousin so much altered, vainly plied him with all the good things of the season.

Conversation, after drifting out to India and then round Morpington, settled down comfortably next door, and the general, his money, his stamps, his good qualities, his fine settlements, were discussed.

"Rose is quite an heiress now," remarked Annie. "She has all her grandmother's money."

"And in consequence has received several offers of marriage," supplemented Mrs. Baggot. "It is a very pleasant thing for a girl to have money of her own—it gives her plenty of choice—I had money myself, you know."

"But I am sure my uncle never gave it a thought. If a man cares for a girl, he does not think of her money."

"Pray, how do you know, Master Roger? All the same, it is very nice of you to pay a compliment to your old auntie, and I must honestly admit that Henry was quite indifferent to my *dot*. What are you going to do this afternoon? Shall we take a drive? I never ride now."

"I have promised to go in next door about four o'clock," he answered a little shyly, "to look at the great stamp."

"What a wonderful attraction these stamps have!" said Mrs. Baggot, casting up her hands. "I am glad that you are of an *adhesive* nature, Roger. I shall get you to take in a note for me—I want the general and Rose to come to dinner."

CHAPTER XXX.

A STRAY NOTE.

AT four o'clock to the second, Captain Hope presented himself at No. 13; was admitted, and actually welcomed by Leach. This was a change, but there were other changes here; he scarcely recognized the house, especially the drawing-room: gone were the iron-grey curtains, the files of stiff chairs, the cribbage board, the old lady with her ear-trumpet, and the minar (he was in disgrace and banishment in the kitchen, as his remarks were far too personal for Clara's delicate sensibilities; he was a coarse, uncourteous bird; she often wished that William the Conqueror would eat him). There were pretty chairs and sofas, a piano turned out backwards and fashionably draped; there were palms, flowers and, oh, suggestive item, two little fat green love-birds in a cage! Evidently the general was determined to have a modern home for a modern wife. The door opened and he came into the room, followed by Rose in a cool white dress. After vigorously discussing the weather, the condition of the army, and the volunteer review, the general said:

"Well, come along now and I'll show you *the* stamp. I won't detain you long, but will send you back to Rose for a cup of tea. I've some business letters to write for the next post, and I have to take Clara out when the great heat of the day is over; my time is not my own now, you see," he added jocosely.

Thus talking as he preceded him, he conducted Roger into the well-known study; it was but little changed, save that it was pervaded by large-sized, flattering, photographs of Clara. There was one on his writing table, three on the chimney-piece, two on the wall. The great treasure was deliberately produced and flaunted before Roger's eyes, but he gave it a very indifferent, not to say cursory inspection; he did not seem to care, when his host repeated in a husky confidential whisper:

"And I got it for nothing—for nothing, sir."

"Look here," said Roger, controlling an insane impulse to throw it into the fire; "may I ask you something?"

"Of course. You are not going to ask me, if I am sure it's not a reprint? I can swear that it's genuine," banging the table with his fist.

"Reprint be ——!" He swallowed down a bad word as he said, "I want to ask if Miss Yaldwin is engaged to be married."

"Bless my soul, sir! not to my knowledge."

"Then if it is a clear course, may I try my luck?"

"You may, with all my heart; yes, that you may. There is no one I'd like so well. I've always fancied you, and I'm sure Clara will be delighted." (Poor innocent old man.) "You know Rose has my wife's fortune—five hundred a year—and I'll settle something handsome on her—her father's share—and, look here, Hope," with a sudden, wild burst of generosity, "I'll leave you my stamps; you'll value them. Of course Clara has a taste that way, and a fair amateur collection, but women have not the same sound feeling on these matters as men—but that is strictly between you and me."

"My dear general, this is very good of you," said Roger, rising to his feet, "but it is rather premature. It is by no means certain that Miss Yaldwin will have me."

"Then, my good fellow, just go and ask her at once; there is no time like the present—short and sharp has always been my maxim." (Mrs. Skyler would scarcely agree with this.) "I'll be like what's his name, and hold the bridge; you shail have five

minutes without interruption ; you can easily say all you have to say in five minutes. I wish you luck." And he pushed him into the hall.

Rose was arranging some flowers as he entered. She looked up and smiled, and said :

" I am afraid you are a humbug ! You cannot have made a very exhaustive examination of the stamps."

" No—ah—the fact is, I scarcely looked at them. I wanted to see you, Miss Yaldwin, and to ask you, if you got the note which I put in at the top of the bouquet ?"

" Note," she repeated, colouring ; " no, there was no note."

" You know," he pursued doggedly, " when I came back from the ball I had still your bouquet. I was desperate at not seeing you, and I wanted to send you a line. My time was to be reckoned by minutes, so I dashed into my aunt's boudoir, and scribbled off a note. I felt that I *could* not go, without some sort of an answer from you. I stuck this note on the top of the flowers, where you could not fail to *see* it, and Annie promised me that she would give you the bouquet with her own hands."

" The bouquet was brought by a servant, for Annie was ill—there was no note," and, blushing a guilty smile, she added, " You know my love for keeping pressed flowers ; I—I have the bouquet still."

" You have !" he echoed incredulously.

" Yes ; I kept it in water and cut the stalks, and it lasted for days, and when it was quite dead I rolled it up in silver paper and put it away. You see," she pleaded apologetically, " it was my very first bouquet ; I have not looked at it for ages."

" Would you mind looking at it now, or am I giving you a lot of trouble ?"

Rose left the room at once. Her heart was beating fast—no, it was not from running up-stairs. What did he mean about a note, and an answer, and being quite desperate ? She pulled out a drawer and got the bouquet—the bouquet, indeed—unfastened the paper that inclosed its dry remains, and spread it out before her. The once lovely white nosegay was now a mere wisp of withered leaves and twigs. She untied the string, cut the wire, and it fell to pieces ; and, behold, there in the middle lay a crumpled letter—a note written on Mrs. Baggot's crested paper

much discoloured, but legible. Rose trembled as she read it. It said :

“ DEAR ROSE,

“ You have broken your promise and I am just starting. Why did you not come to the ball? I am desperately disappointed. I wanted to ask you a question, and to take away my answer from your lips. I must scrawl the question here, whilst the cab waits. You know that I love you, Rose ; will you be my wife when I return to England—please God, in a year’s time, or less? Send me a line—yes, or no. Something has come between us of late ; I never can see or speak to you, try as I will. The ‘ Euphrates ’ sails to-morrow afternoon. I can get your answer before we start : one word, which will make me happy or miserable.

“ Yours always,

“ R. HOPE.”

It was evidently written in hot haste, but Rose managed to master every word. She read it twice, and then, by a sudden impulse of self-vindication, she put it back to its place among the stalks, rolled it up in them, and carried the bouquet down to its donor.

She advanced into the drawing-room, looking rather white, and laid her treasure on the top of the cottage piano, and saying as she did so, with a sort of catch in her breath :

“ It was there—I have found it,” and she held up the note. “ Some one must have pushed it down ; it was twisted in among the stalks, as you can see.”

“ And you have read it? ”

“ Yes, I have,” and she blushed prodigiously.

“ And after waiting for eighteen months, may I hope for an answer now? ”

Rose looked down, but made no reply.

He came a step nearer.

“ Do you think you could accept me as companion, instead of the pleasant elderly lady? ”

A brief flicker of a smile was evidently considered a satisfactory reply. The general’s five minutes had been lengthened into fifteen.

Rose stood turning over the remains of the dead bouquet with mechanical fingers, listening to the eager words of her companion.

"There is nothing to prevent our being married at once," he was saying. "This is August, and September is a splendid month abroad."

"You are going a great deal too fast—we must consider grandpapa's plans."

"Well, I won't ask you to take part in a double wedding."

"No," she interrupted with a smile. "That would be too ridiculous, and *we* can afford to wait."

"It seems to me, that I have waited a good while already," he protested.

"But, surely that was not my fault."

The lady whose fault it had been, was now actually in the hall, having an animated altercation with her *fiancé*, for the general had opened the door in person, and said most mysteriously:

"Come into my study, Clara—you must not go into the drawing-room just now."

"Nonsense, dearest. What *do* you mean? Is the chimney on fire?"

"I mean," he whispered, "that Hope has just asked my permission, to speak to Rose."

Before he could add another word, the handle was briskly whisked round, and the door of the drawing-room flung wide open.

Yes, sure enough. There were Rose and Roger standing beside the piano (which occupied a conspicuous place), and on the top of it was spread out, what looked like a bundle of withered twigs and stalks. In a second, the astute lady had divined the bouquet—and her equally astute cousin had divined her guilt. He saw it in her heightened colour, and her stealthy glance. Yes, she was the culprit. She had watched Roger insert the note, and when he had rushed upstairs to change, she had got a long knitting needle out of Annie's basket, and poked the *billet doux* entirely out of sight, knowing well that Rose Yaldwin would be the last girl to search for one.

So, she was too late! She saw it in Rose's blushes, and in their happy faces. There was nothing now for her to do but accept the inevitable with what grace she could muster; but she had great command over herself, and was always equal to any emergency.

"Ah! I see how it is. You sly people," graciously extending both hands to Roger, and turning to kiss Rose. "I am so charmed. Now we shall be doubly connected. It seems, my dear, that after all"—and as she smiled into the girl's face, her squint was positively startling—"you had never given up—Hope?"

"It is fortunate for me, that she had not," replied Roger. "She will never be without it as long as she lives," for, placing her hand in the general's, he said, "she has promised to be Mrs. Hope."

The general beamed on the young couple; kissed Rose warmly; wrung Roger's fingers, and with a promise to dine next door, he hurried back to his letters, leaving the betrothed pair alone with Mrs. Skyler—their evil genius.

Roger now remembered, with unpleasant distinctness, that he had left the note and bouquet in Clara's neighbourhood the night of the ball, and felt a firm conviction that he owed all his love troubles to the fascinating woman before him, who, with her hands locked in an engaging attitude, was gazing at him meditatively, with her head on one side.

"Dear me," she cried, "how interesting! Roger, you are hope. Rose, it seems, has been the embodiment of faith. And I ——"

"And you," he interposed, his mind sore with an exasperating sense of injury, "would scarcely present yourself as charity. That would never do. I have not had a chance, as yet, of congratulating you. Allow me to do so now. We shall be, as you mentioned, doubly connected, and I cannot tell you how I am looking forward to the time, when you, dear Clara, will be not only my cousin—but my grandmamma!"

* * * *

Mrs. Baggot's little dinner, was a brilliant success. It is not often that a party of six includes two engaged couples. The younger pair had the heartfelt sympathies of Mrs. Baggot and Annie. Annie looked upon them as her special *protégés*, and her mother was enchanted; seldom had her spirits been so high, or her eyes so bright, her pleasantries so many. She kissed Rose repeatedly; she took off her best emerald ring and slipped it on her middle finger, saying:

"At any rate, there is your first wedding present, my love." She made Roger carve, and actually placed herself between him and Rose, saying, "I hope you will never have a worse person than *me* to come between you," and altogether behaved like a fussy old lunatic, in the opinion of her eldest daughter.

Clara was splendidly dressed—over-dressed. The body of her black gown was blazing with diamond stars, swallows, lizards and frogs. A costly bouquet lay beside her. She talked of her future French maid and her new landau. Her laugh was loud and constant, and she was effusively affectionate to her "dear general," as she called him; but there was a hard, set look about her face, that afforded a strong contrast, to the radiant expression of the younger *fiancée*, who had as yet neither flowers, or diamonds—nor even an engagement ring.

After dinner there ensued the inevitable game of whist. Clara made a bold attempt to thrust Rose into her place, as partner to the general, and thus to secure a *tête-à-tête* with Roger; but she was foiled in her manœuvre, and, to her great disgust, the newly-betrothed pair were allowed to withdraw into a corner, to whisper together over a book of photographs. Many a time Clara's malignant eye, wandered from her cards in their direction, and her mistakes in consequence, were particularly flagrant. Clara hated whist, and dreaded these games with her future lord and master. A whist table was the one impregnable position where she had not the smallest control over him or his temper. He scolded her openly, and glared, and thumped on the table, and called out in a stentorian voice:

"God bless my soul, woman! Are you an idiot? That was a thirteenth card!"

And all this before Roger. It was really too mortifying.

Meanwhile, Rose was inquiring in a low voice:

"How could you say it, Roger?"

"Say what?" he whispered in reply.

"About Clara being your grandmother. Did you not see how dreadfully angry she looked? She will never forgive you."

"I don't care. I was dreadfully angry with her. And as to forgiveness, she is in my debt, and I am not sure, that I shall ever grant her a pardon."

"Why, what has she done?"

"I cannot tell you just now, but I will tell you something else instead. Your grandfather has offered us the minar."

"Oh, has he?"

"And I have accepted him, subject to your approval. We can keep him in the hall to receive visitors."

"I shall be delighted to have him. He never calls me horrible names, as he does Clara—I am always his good girl, and his own Rose."

"Indeed. And pray, who has taught him to be so affectionate?"

"Grandpapa," she answered with a laugh. "Times are changed, you see."

"I see. But your grandfather and the bird will have to make up their minds to another change. They must forego their claims in deference to mine, for now you are *my* Rose—notwithstanding delays, obstructions, lost letters," and to himself he added, with a glance at the whist table, "in spite of my clever cousin Clara."

THE END.

Mummied Animals.

NOT only did the ancient Egyptians embalm the bodies of the human dead, they performed a like operation upon the remains of the sacred animals, though in general less expense and trouble were taken over them, animals being chiefly prepared by soaking in natron.

The list of sacred animals is a long one, though the very ones that were most highly esteemed in some places were most abhorred in others.

The list includes dogs, cats, monkeys, lions, wolves, jackals, foxes, hyænas, bears, ichneumon, shrew-mice, bulls, deer, goats, sheep, hippopotami, vultures, eagles, falcons, hawks, owls, ibis, geese, swallows, crocodiles, toads, lizards, serpents, fish of various kinds, rats, mice, beetles, and even insects and flies. As a rule, with the large animals, the head only was mummied, the body being represented by pieces of wood. The birds are squeezed together and lose their shape, except the ibis, which, according to Belzoni, is formed like a fowl ready to be cooked. The ibis and the hawk appear to have had the most care bestowed upon them, for resin and asphalt are frequently found within their envelopes. Birds in general having been wrapped in their bandages, were then placed in an earthen urn and deposited in the tomb.

No mummies of animals are to be met with in the tombs of the higher class persons; most of them had their own proper sepulchres consecrated and appropriated to their species only, but they were occasionally found mixed.

The catacomb of birds is distinct from the catacomb of human mummies. One bird only is inclosed in each earthen pot, and an infinite number of pots were found in good order, whole and sealed; the hot nature of the materials with which they had been embalmed had, however, dried up the greater number to powder. Upon the possession of Egypt by the French, upwards of five hundred mummies of the ibis alone were discovered in the catacomb of birds. Certain animals were maintained at the public expense in sacred parks, and persons were appointed to nourish them with the greatest care. Bread, milk, honey, meat,

birds, fish, &c., were all supplied according to the nature of the animals ; no expense was spared ; the keepers bore upon their persons the resemblance of the species to which their care was devoted, and people paid marks of respect to them as they passed along. The greatest sorrow was manifested at the death of any of them ; they were embalmed and interred with great pomp and splendour.

So great was the veneration in which these animals were held, that though when a famine afflicted Egypt the people were driven to eat human flesh, yet the sacred beasts, birds, reptiles or fishes were always respected ; they would rather eat their own species than lay sacrilegious hands upon what might be gods in disguise.

Animals of the lowest character, even noxious insects, were fostered in their temples, nourished by their priests, embalmed after death, entombed with pomp, and received all kinds of honours.

Those who either by accident or design occasioned the death of any of these animals paid the forfeit of their lives as the penalty of the offence. Diodorus Siculus says, " He who has voluntarily killed a consecrated animal is punished with death ; but if any one has even involuntarily killed a cat or an ibis it is impossible for him to escape capital punishment ; the mob drags him to it, treating him with every cruelty and sometimes without waiting for judgment to be passed."

If a cat died, the owner of the house shaved off his eyebrows, but if a dog died, he shaved his whole head, which would appear to denote that dogs were held in greater veneration than cats. In either case the greatest grief was shown, the people beating themselves on the breast and uttering doleful cries ; the animal was then delivered to the embalmer to be prepared and deposited in the proper tomb.

The cat was principally worshipped at Bubastis. Most of the cats that died in Egypt were embalmed and buried there. In the desert valley near to Beni-Hassan is a small temple excavated in a rock, and dedicated to the goddess Bubastis, surrounded by different tombs for sacred cats, some cut in the rock. Before the temple, under the sand, there was found a large mound of mummies of cats folded in mats, and mixed with those of dogs ; and further on in the desert plain were two large collections of mummies of cats in packets, and covered with ten feet of sand. One tomb was filled with cats carefully folded in red

and white linen, the heads covered by masks representing the cat, and made of the same linen.

There have been more mummies of the ibis found in Egypt than of any other bird or animal, but very few in a perfect state. At Memphis there are thousands of them in pots of common stone or blue ware, or of hard polished stone of a lengthened conical figure ; even the eggs of the ibis have been found preserved.

Hardly ever have mummied animals been discovered in the human tombs, and never by any chance were amulets put with animals.

Crocodiles were embalmed and deposited in catacombs purposely excavated for them. The small ones were bandaged entire, but when they attained any size only the head was embalmed, the remainder of the animal being represented by stalks of palm trees, bandages, &c. In the caves of Maabdeh, however, entire mummied crocodiles of the largest size have been found perfectly preserved.

Generally, five or six serpents were inclosed in one envelope ; in some instances the bandaging was very carefully done, and the cloth was of a red colour in addition to the usual yellow-stained linen.

In addition to these, numerous small fishes have been discovered, and yet smaller insects, all carefully embalmed and deposited in the several tombs prepared to receive them.

In many cases the animals were placed in mummy-pots, in others simply bandaged and laid in the pits, and in only a few instances have they been put in cases like the human mummies.

These latter receptacles are of different kinds and shapes. The first, or cartonnage case, is composed of folds of linen cemented together and plastered with lime on the inside ; they are as firm as a board, and require to be sawed through in order to get at the body ; the shape corresponds to that of the human frame. On the head is represented a face, either male or female, and the features are often depicted in gold and colours. Some of these cases are very handsome, the colours with which they are decorated having retained their freshness and beauty in a most surprising manner. Red, blue, yellow, green, white and black are the colours to be found on the cases and on the walls of the tombs.

The second case is usually of sycamore, sometimes hewn out

of a solid trunk, sometimes composed of several pieces glued together, and fastened as the single trunk ones are with wooden pegs fitting into corresponding cavities, and thus closing the whole in the most perfect manner.

It was commonly supposed that the subject of the representation upon the cases was a history of the life of the person embalmed within, but Pettigrew asserts that this is inaccurate. The hieroglyphics are very similar in most cases, and usually begin with the same symbols. Pettigrew thinks that the subject of the book of the dead bears relation to the trial which the soul was to undergo, and the deities through whose intervention, or by whose intercession, it was to pass through the different stages of its progress towards another state of existence.

Sometimes three and even four cases were used, but this only in the instance of rich and distinguished persons. Occasionally the outer one was made of cedar, this being the least corruptible of woods and emblematic of eternity, the whole covered with a varnish that preserves it very effectually.

The bodies of kings were in an especial manner protected ; after being inclosed in the linen and wooden cases, they were deposited in sarcophagi of stone, marble, alabaster or granite, and these again were placed in tombs hewn out of the solid rock or constructed of various durable substances, where a great many of them remain until this day, defying as it were the power of time, though the cupidity of man has unearthed some of them from what ought to have been their last resting-place in the eternal habitations.

Most of the papyri found with the mummies contained the funerary ritual, either longer or shorter according to the rank of the person embalmed, but other subjects have been met with, such as chemistry or alchemy, one relating to the mysteries of the ancient Egyptians, another to astrology, an ode in praise of one of the Pharaohs, a laudatory account of the exploits of Rameses the Great, a history of part of the reign of Sesostris, the plan of a royal catacomb, and a very remarkable MS. relating to the sale of a portion of the offerings made from time to time on account, or for the benefit of, a certain number of mummies of persons described at length, in very bad Greek, with their children and all their households.

The more modern the mummy, the rarer the MSS., and the more careless the execution of them. Belzoni averred that

papyri were never found in the mummies that were placed in cases, only in those that were deposited in the tombs after having been bandaged, but this has been proved to be erroneous, a large number having been procured from cased mummies.

Numerous are the varied objects that have been found in the tombs. Buried with the deceased were the emblems of their professions. Loaves of bread near the mummy of a baker, paints and brushes beside an artist, instruments of surgery by a physician, bows and arrows by a hunter, a lance, a hatchet or a poignard by a soldier, the style and inkpot by a clerk, nets beside a fisherman, razor and stone by a barber; vases of pottery, wooden vessels of all kinds, baskets of fruits, seeds, &c. ; a distaff in the cases of male mummies confirming the statement of Herodotus that men were employed in the manufacturing of cloth, whilst women were engaged in commerce. Combs of ivory and gold, vases of perfumes, mirrors, paint for the eyebrows with brush to apply it and other articles of the toilet have been discovered with the female mummies, not to mention the wonderful lady's wig with its multitudinous little curls and plaits as perfect as though just fresh from the barber's hands, discovered by the Rev. Greville Chester within the last few years and by him presented to the British Museum, showing that the fair sex from the earliest times were not above "making up" to enhance their charms.

What is perhaps more pathetic than all is a ball of skin composed of different colours and taken from the hand of the mummy of a little child who had been put to rest with its beloved plaything closely grasped in the tiny fingers, to remain undisturbed for some three thousand years, and then to be torn from its owner by sacrilegious hands.

Amulets of every description are found in great profusion and some very fine jewellery, but no coins or money. Necklaces are found upon men as well as upon women. They are made of various substances, gold, enamel, glass, cornelian, shells, lapis lazuli, ivory, bronze, iron and enamelled earth, also earrings, bracelets, rings, girdles, pins for the head, tweezers, scissors, vestments, tunics, sandals of wood and skin, leaves of palm, shoes, mallets, nails, ladles, bronze keys, wooden pillows, wooden cisterns, knives in silex and wood, spoons, medicine chests, stools, musical reeds or pipes and bells are among the objects that have been unearthed.

Some of the female mummies are covered with ornaments of considerable value, the hair tastefully plaited and ornamented with spangles. As many as three necklaces were found on one mummy, composed of representations of the divinities, amulets, &c., in coral, lapis lazuli and other precious stones, and in gold, displaying great taste and fine workmanship. Earrings of fine gold, a scarabæus set in gold as a ring for the forefinger of the left hand, an elegant girdle round the body matching the necklace, and a bracelet of fine pearls, precious stones and gold on the left wrist.

With this mummy there were three small alabaster vases, one containing a liquid balm or wash for the face, another perfume and the third some eyebrow paint with a bundle of cloth made like a brush to apply it, also a metallic mirror and a small cistern.

It is said that the Coptic ladies of the present day paint their eyebrows with the same sort of mineral matter which is found in these mummy vases.

It is scarcely to be wondered at that tomb breaking was rife in Egypt at a very early period when it was known the amount of treasures that were buried with the illustrious dead ; neither is it extraordinary that the Egyptians took such pains to conceal the resting-places of their kings.

All mummies were not bandaged, many had only the covering of a mat which surrounded them. Belzoni saw the bodies of two women lying on the ground in a corner of a chamber in one of the tombs in the valley of Biban-el-Molouk, without any bandages; they were well preserved, their hair long and flowing in tresses.

The quantity of bandages used in some mummies is stated to be more than one thousand yards; the Bedouins were in the habit of taking it away to make vestments, or to sell for the manufacture of paper for the grocers. The bandages on the priest Horsiesi weighed thirty five pounds and a half.

The bandages were either cotton or linen ; woollen were never used.

Some of the mummies had on chemises without sleeves, three feet eight inches in length and well made, the collar and sleeve holes being hemmed round with remarkable neatness ; round the bottom was a fringe an inch and a half in breadth, and one had been mended in several places.

Those mummies that have recently been discovered at Echmim, in Upper Egypt, seem to have been interred in the self-same clothes which they wore in life. Of course these are of much later date than the ancient Egyptian and Ptolemic-Greek ones, the tombs of which underlie the others at a considerable depth, but they are very interesting from the beautiful textiles of which their robes are composed. Except in rare cases these latter bodies were not mummied in the Egyptian manner nor swathed in bandages, they were simply buried in shallow graves dug in the sandy upper-soil overlying the tombs of the old Egyptians and Greeks. The extreme dryness of the climate, assisted by the natural salts contained in the soil, have reduced these bodies to a condition resembling leather, and upon them are found these interesting specimens of work, some of which are now to be seen in the South Kensington Museum and also in some private collections.

The piece of worsted work presented by Mr. Chester to the British Museum is a most interesting relic and in a remarkable state of preservation. The boat with the two figures resembles that of the ancient Egyptians, and the fabric is supposed to have been executed on the spot, or at all events in Egypt about the third century of the Christian era. The border, representing garlands of leaves, flowers and cupid's heads, is evidently Roman in design.

There are specimens of woven linen, embroidered linen, silk, cloth, a fabric resembling lace and worsted work. There is one piece in a private collection with a drawn thread, which is very curious, and some with quaint and extraordinary designs, among which the partridge is evidently a favourite.

Mr. Flinders Petrie discovered many specimens of this ancient worsted work in the Roman Cemetery, recently excavated by him, near Harvara, in the Fayoum; but they are in a much less perfect state of preservation than those found in the Necropolis of Panopolis. Another interesting relic Mr. Flinders Petrie has unearthed in Egypt is an angling hook of the ancient Egyptians, and he pronounces it to be at least four thousand years old. It bears a very close resemblance to the well-known Limerick hooks with one barb on the inner side.

A false tooth was also found a little while ago in one of the Egyptian tombs. Verily indeed there is nothing new under the sun.

Frequent deceptions have been practised in the manufacture of mummies. The Arabs at Gournou, finding it a profitable trade, make "mumma" to sell to the unwary purchaser. Mummies supposed to be true Egyptian are composed of the most veritable rubbish, but so cleverly done as to deceive even experienced collectors. Saw-dust, bundles of rags of various descriptions, a portion of stick to serve the place of the spine, the vertebræ of a cat mixed up with dust, bones of monkeys and other animals, are all used in making up these deceptive mummies. Around these figures are true Egyptian bandages taken off real mummies, and the faces are formed of linen covered with plaster of Paris and carefully made out. One traveller says that in some of the chambers of the tombs heaps of bones and pieces of linen such as described may be seen, and the Arabs are very expert at forming these fictitious mummies, several of which, put into real cases, have been sent to England. These men break open the real mummies contained in the tombs and inclosed within the most ornamented sarcophagi, to abstract from them the jewels that adorn them and the amulets and idols that are sometimes placed within the bodies ; they then substitute the fictitious for the original inmates.

Honey was used by some nations to embalm their dead ; the Assyrians placed bodies in it to preserve them from corruption. The Romans also used it for the same purpose. The body of Alexander the Great was embalmed with honey. Abd' Allatif relates that a man found a sealed cruise, and, having opened it, he discovered that it contained honey, which he began to eat, until one of his companions observed a hair upon his finger, when the vessel was more closely examined, and a little child, all perfect, was withdrawn from it. The body was well preserved and furnished with rich jewels and ornaments.

Other substances employed were wax, bitumen, resin, nitre, asphaltum, myrrh, cassia, cedar, different species of balm, powdered aromatics, colocynth, aloes and natron.

Perhaps the most curious thing about mummies is the rage for them as a drug in the sixteenth and part of the seventeenth centuries ; it was to be found in the shops of all apothecaries, and considerable sums of money were expended in the purchase of it, principally from the Jews in the East.

No sooner had it come into fashion as a medicine than the tombs were searched and as many mummies as could be obtained

were broken into pieces for the purpose of sale. The demand, however, was not easily supplied ; for the government of Egypt was unwilling to permit the transportation of the bodies from their sepulchral habitation. The consequence was, that the temptation to manufacture false mummies was irresistible. Some Jews entered into what turned out to be a lucrative speculation. They procured bodies of all descriptions that could be obtained, no matter of what they had died ; executed criminals, slaves, even those who had met their deaths from horrible and loathsome diseases such as the plague, leprosy, or smallpox, they cared not whence they came, whether they were old or young, or of what disease they had died, so long as they could obtain them, for when embalmed no one could tell them from genuine mummies.

Their mode of operation was to fill the head and inside of the bodies with simple asphaltum, an article of very small price ; they made incisions into the muscular parts of the limbs, inserted into them also the asphaltum and then bound them up tightly. This being done, the bodies were exposed to the heat of the sun ; they dried quickly, and resembled the truly prepared mummies. These were sold to the Christians.

Mummy was supposed to be a panacea for almost every disease under the sun, and was prescribed by some of the most eminent physicians ; it was to be taken in decoctions of marjoram, thyme, elder, barley, roses, lentils, jujubes, cummin seed, carraway, saffron, cassia, parsley, with oxymel, wine, milk, butter, castor and syrup of mulberries, and a horrible dose it must have been even though disguised under so many different flavours. The mummies of young girls were considered to be most efficacious, consequently they fetched the highest prices, and physicians were careful to direct their patients to procure the veritable Egyptain mummies.

However, all the doctors were not of the same mind regarding this disgusting drug ; some were bold enough to raise their voices against the wide-spread use of it. Grew said, " Let them see to it, that dare to trust to old gums, which have long since lost their virtue."

The demand for mummy was greater in France than in any other country ; François I. was in the habit of always carrying about with him a little packet containing some mummy mixed with pulverized rhubarb, ready to take upon receiving any injury

from falls or other accidents that might happen to him. Armed with this universal remedy, he thought himself secure against all danger.

A French physician, however, Ambrose Paré, did not place the same reliance upon it. He stated that neither the physicians who prescribed mummy, nor the apothecaries who sold it, nor the authors who wrote of it, knew anything of certainty respecting it ; he condemned its use in the following terms :

“ This wicked kind of drugge, doth nothing helpe the diseased, in that case, wherefore and wherein it is administered, as I have tryed an hundred times, and as Thevet witnesses, he tryed in himselfe, when as hee tooke some thereof by the advice of a certaine Jewish physition in Egypte, from whence it is brought ; but it also inferres many troublesome symptomes, as the paine of the heart, or stomacke, vomiting, and stinke of the mouth. I, perswaded by these reasons, doe not onely myselfe prescribe any hereof to my patients, but also in consultations, endeavour what I may, that it bee not prescribed by others.”

Most moderns would agree with the result arrived at by the famous surgeon.

The cessation of the use of mummy as a drug was due to the suspension of the traffic in false mummies. A Jew of Damietta had a Christian slave whom he ill-used because he would not embrace the true faith. The man retaliated by denouncing his master's nefarious practices in the manufacture of fraudulent mummies, with the result that the Jew was thrown into prison, and only released on paying a very large sum in gold. The governors of other cities in Egypt, delighted with the prospect of obtaining a great deal of money very easily, exacted a ransom from all those Jews who were merchants of mummies. From this time the traffic ceased ; the Jews, fearful of being subjected to a new oppression, dared no longer continue their trade.

The Arabs to this day make use of mummy powder for a medicine mixed with butter. It is esteemed a sovereign remedy for bruises both external and internal.

Pettigrew gives an interesting account of “ mumiya ; ” the bitumen or mineral pitch which flows down from the tops of mountains and mixing with the waters that carry it down coagulates, and exhales an odour resembling that of white (Burgundy) pitch and bitumen.

Sir William Ouseley visited the mummy mountain in the territory of Darábgerd in Persia. He fancied that it presented a darker appearance than the mountains adjacent to it. He describes the "mummy" as a blackish bituminous matter, which oozes from the rock, and is considered by the Persians as far more precious than gold, for it heals cuts and bruises, as they affirm, almost immediately ; causes fractured bones to unite in a few minutes, and, taken inwardly, is a sovereign remedy for many diseases. Sir William quotes from a manuscript work of the tenth century in which the mountain is described, and states that the mummy was gathered for the king, and that numerous officers were commissioned to guard it ; that once in every year they opened the door of the cavern, in which was a stone, perforated with a small hole, and in this the mummy was found collected.

The produce of the year amounted only to a portion of the size of a pomegranate, and it was sealed up in the presence of priests, magistrates, &c., and deposited in the Royal Treasury. Eastern princes, both giver and receiver, esteemed a very small portion as a present of considerable value.

In 1809, a portion of this mummy was sent to the Queen of England as a present from the King of Persia. The Empress of Russia received a like present, about an ounce in a gold box. A man at Isfáhán demanded nine tománs, about eight pounds sterling, and would not take less from a gentleman of Sir William Ouseley's party, for as much as could be contained within a common-sized walnut shell.

It was a popular opinion that the ancient Egyptians preserved the bodies of their princes and chief personages by means of the natural mummy, for which they afterwards substituted, under the same name, a compound aromatic balsam.

Among the things that have more recently been discovered are some flutes in the mummy case of a lady who died over three thousand years ago. These were displayed at the Royal Academy of Music on December 3rd, 1890, when Mr. T. L. Southgate read a paper entitled, "A Glance at the Music of the Ancient Egyptians."

A most interesting fact is that the diatonic scale can be produced on these venerable instruments, showing that the origin of the scale must go back past the Greeks to a much older civilization.

A. M. JUDD.

The End of a Beginning.

By S. M. CRAWLEY BOEVEY.

AN August sun was sinking in the west and his attendant clouds had almost laid aside their robes of many colours. A tender grey was creeping up over the pinks and ambers that a short time ago delighted the eyes of all who saw with the love of beauty in their gaze, and there was a hush of coming night, broken only by the notes of a belated bird or the distant soft splash of sea waves.

It was a time of day that wooed many to linger in the flower and hay scented air before taking shelter in the house, and in the garden of a north-country vicarage sauntered a couple, each of whom was evidently too much absorbed in the other to notice eavesdroppers or onlookers. The one was young, with short yellow curls playing at will round an upturned face, that reminded one of wild rose petals. The other was older and taller, and his bent head threw the features into deep shadow.

"You have been three weeks home from school, Chérie," he was saying earnestly, "and there is no need for you to be toiling at lessons now that you have left—that you are eighteen. Surely you might spare a little more time for an old friend who has his orders for sea, and may not see you again for months—years—who knows?"

A smile broke in the listener's eyes and at the corners of her pouting red lips.

"Dear Hulbert," she answered, in half-coaxing tones of would-be apology, "you see, father does not want me to be like the girls about Sandyside. He says, lessons should only begin with school and go on through life ; besides——"

Hulbert Lassing kicked away a loose pebble with an impatient "pish!" and a frown clouded for an instant his good-tempered face.

"Nonsense, Chérie," he broke in, "nothing could make you like other girls, to my mind at least. Why, even in our games,

as children, long ago, I used to think you different. It is the same now, and—and—this is my last evening.”

Here Hulbert's voice faltered, and the pair moved silently on to a walk bordered on either side by a trimly-cut yew hedge. There was a moss-grown sun-dial at the farther end with a wooden seat behind it, and till they reached this no more words were spoken. Chérie Nister was—truth to tell—grateful for the dim light, because of the unshed tears that filled her eyes, making speech difficult, but by the time she came to a standstill she had steadied her voice enough to use it.

“We shall meet again—this is not the first time you have left home for a voyage.”

“Aye, but you are a woman now,” pleaded Hulbert, “and Chérie, darling, one never knows what the future may have in store, so do not send me away without a few kind words just to remember till we see each other again. I do not want to bind you by any promise, for that would be neither right nor fair to you, just on the threshold, as it were, of a new life. Only it would make all the difference to me if——”

“I love you—you know it,” murmured Chérie, staring hard at the sun-dial while she put a hand into Hulbert's restless ones, that tore a spray of yew to pieces, unconscious of the fact.

The words and action altered the face of the world to him in an instant. “Thank you,” said he quietly, and he grasped the small white fingers that nestled under his own, as if he would have taken possession of them without further argument. “Now, why could you not have told me that half-an-hour ago, instead of putting me off about a dozen other things, and people who have no earthly interest for me, except so far as they concern you. This is all I wanted, and we will keep our own secret till—till——”

“What will your sisters think?” inquired Chérie, looking up suddenly into the face above. “You have so many, and they are so wise and old and big. I feel a little afraid of them.”

Hulbert laughed gaily. “They are the kindest creatures possible, all the ten, which, I grant you, is an alarming number. But, you see, they haven't the least idea of our secret, thanks to their notion that you are still a child, perhaps, and it's best to keep it to ourselves, eh?”

"Chérie, Chérie, where are you?" called a shrill voice in the distance; "your father says there is a heavy dew to-night, and you ought not to be out without a shawl."

"God bless and keep you, my dearest," whispered Hulbert, snatching the girl to him for a long passionate kiss before she could free herself from his arms. "This is good-bye, for I leave by an early train to-morrow."

"Coming, mother," cried Cherie, as she flitted back along the yew walk in such a tumult of gladness and sorrow, it would have been hard to say which had the upper hand at first. "It is Hulbert's fault, for he wanted to see the sun-flowers under the south wall, and then he coaxed me to the old dial yonder, but it is too hot for wraps," and with a playful movement the speaker flung her white skirt over her shoulders.

Mrs. Nister was reassured by the sight of her only child, who slipped a hand coaxingly into the bend of the nearest arm when she had joined her mother. The latter was a faded reproduction of the former, in cap and spectacles, and, curiously enough, her mental vision was likewise in need of help where Chérie was concerned, for Mrs. Nister, like many parents, was not yet awake to the fact that her daughter had left childhood behind.

The Lassings of Easton lived three miles away, and succeeded the Nisters at the Rectory, when they went some years ago to Sandyside Vicarage. The families had always been on friendly terms, so that Hulbert's visits excited no more comment than those of his sisters, and Mr. Nister dozed over his *Times* that August evening as free from suspicion as his wife that anything unusual was taking place in the garden. Nevertheless, the vicar opened his eyes, and smoothed his silver-grey hair when he caught the sound of returning footsteps. For Chérie was as the very apple of the man's eye in virtue, firstly, of her own sweet self, and secondly, for her likeness to his pretty French mother, after whom she was named. The sound of steps meant to him that Chérie was coming into sight again; with the sunny curls and the gentle merry ways which made the girl such a general favourite, the marvel was that she showed no signs of being spoilt. There was only one shadow on Mr. Nister's joy in his treasure, and this he resolutely put aside when it crossed his mind. His much-loved mother was cut off early in decline, and

the granddaughter was perilously like her in colouring, though hitherto no special signs of delicacy had been noticed.

Hulbert bounded home that night as if he trod upon air, and merrily as he went rang out a song in rich bass notes, telling plainly enough to chance hearers that the world went well with the singer. And so in truth it did. The Lassings were people of comfortable means ; Hulbert was the idol of a father and ten sisters, besides which he was blessed with health and a happy temper. It was as if Pandora had showered upon him the contents of her magic box, keeping nothing back to restrain the envy of the less-favoured.

The passers-by were few that summer night, for Hulbert chose a way across the deserted sands, where wavelets lapped softly upwards as if they had for a goal the little black boats grouped in rows along the shore. The sailor chose this way because the music of the sea made fit accompaniment to the melody in his heart, the title of which is known to most, high or low, and all agree in thankfulness for the sweetest music sent by heaven to brighten life on earth.

* * * * *

Good-bye is a sorrowful word, and perhaps causes more tears than any other in the dictionary, though in it lie the germs of countless happy meetings.

The rector of Easton was old, and it made his heart ache to part with his only son, but his daughters resolutely wiped their eyes and set themselves with greater zeal than before to manage the affairs of the parish. It was a 'sensible way of taking the sting out of trouble, but then the Lassing ladies, or "the Lasses," as they were familiarly called, were eminently sensible. They were tall, plain women, with straggling, prominent teeth, and complexions like Gruyère cheese, women who were given over to kindly acts and good works of every sort, so that they were a distinct power in the place. If a concert were required, Miss Harry was ready to get it up, and were it not for the feminine title before the masculine abbreviation of Harriet, by which all Easton knew her, she might have been a man, for the energy with which she took things in hand. Miss Sue was a sure helper in every local bazaar, and Miss Lassing was famed for her power of organizing—in short, each sister had some

speciality, and lived together, on the whole, as peacefully as a brood of downy yellow ducklings.

The rector saw all this and was thankful for his daughters, but idolized his son. Indeed, after the light of Hulbert's presence left Easton his father's head was observed to droop a trifle more, though he went about the place as usual with open hand, words or smiles for all. There were many who felt for the Lassing sisters, and one who felt even more for the father, only he never knew this because the fact was carefully buried in silence.

Chérie Nister threw herself with gentle energy into life at home, and when from time to time she met Mr. Lassing, she glanced tenderly at the droop of the white head, understanding, perhaps better than most, what sunshine had gone with his son. There was a fund of reserve in the girl's nature underlying her open, playful manner, which prevented her noticing in words the rector's grief, and she always left him feeling something stronger for a sight of that brave old man. His grey eyes, deeply sunk below broad, massive brows, were the windows of a soul at once kindly and guileless as a child's. The cutaway coat, elaborate folds of a spotless tie, and tall hat formed a clerical attire that belonged to a past order of things. Yet they sat naturally on the rector of Easton, who was Conservative by instinct as well as education.

"Lassing is a grand fellow," people used to say, "and is as much above party as he is above fashion. If there were a few more like him the world might be a better one."

Summer days shortened and wind howled across the bleak moorland round Easton, as if in triumph that the reign of winter was at hand. Winter was apt to be a time of trouble on that part of the coast, for rocks and shoals helped gales to make many a shipwreck, and one part of the hilly churchyard was set aside for the strangers who were sometimes cast ashore with broken timber. Mr. Lassing shivered or sighed, when he thought himself unnoticed, at the sound of that merciless wind, for he knew it boded trouble to somebody; besides, was not Hulbert at sea, far away, with half the world between him and home?

The Lassies were too busy to fret themselves over dark possibilities. They worked, they sang, they chatted, with never idle fingers or tongues; so the winter months slipped peacefully

by, varied by the countless trifles that make the sum of an ordinary woman's life. Now and again a few sisters would walk to Sandyside, or Mrs. Nister drove to Easton to inquire the latest family news, though it was with a careworn face, and Chérie was seldom with her.

"Another cold," the mother explained, a line appearing, as she spoke, between her blue eyes, "and the doctor says she must take care. The child does not understand what that means, and her head is full of this Cambridge examination. Of course we are pleased for her to try, and her father is proud she should have the power as well as the wish. Still, still, I don't think myself she is strong enough for so much study, and what is the good of it all, seeing she will never have to work for her bread?"

"Oh, a cold is nothing to worry about," answered Harry, in the dogmatic tone of a person who knows all about things. "Patty and Con have half-a-dozen in as many weeks, and are none the worse after. Have some more tea?"

The anxious mother considered the subject dismissed by the tea question, nevertheless her fears were not soothed by this treatment of them, especially as Miss Harry was known to be as strong as a horse.

"It is certain that girl is not well," remarked Miss Lassing to her sisters, one evening when the days were drawing out again and summer birds returning from exile. "She looks almost transparent and is sadly thin, though as bright as possible. I don't hold with all this useless learning for our sex. We were taught enough for practical purposes, and what does she want with Greek and algebra?"

"Certainly," said Sue, who generally echoed her elder's opinion; "it's nonsense, dear. Depend upon it, women have no business with these things."

A sunshiny afternoon at the beginning of September, Harriet Lassing walked home after tea at a friend's house, and her way lay through Sandyside. The lady's long legs advanced with the regularity of a grenadier's march, and her brown, mushroom-shaped hat sat, all unconsciously to its wearer, at the back of her head instead of in front. She held a spray of lapageria, the pure waxy blooms of which had just been given to her for an invalid at Easton, whose greatest pleasure was in flowers of every kind. As Harry passed the Vicarage at Sandyside, a sudden

thought made her turn through the front gate to inquire after Chérie, and while she stood waiting for an answer to the bell it struck her as strange that the blinds should be down.

"They cannot be away," thought the caller, "for we saw them three days ago, and they said nothing about it. Ah!—the sun, of course—these windows face south-west."

Meditation was here cut short by the door's opening, and the eyes of the maid who opened it were swollen with many tears. The visitor's heart stood still, and in a kind of gasp the question burst from her lips:

"What is the matter?"

Like rain descended the other's tears once more, and she put up a corner of her apron to wipe them away, while she answered in faltering tones:

"Our Miss Chérie—she was took quite sudden-like scarce two hours ago. The doctor said something about her brain, but I don't rightly understand. Missis is distraught, and poor master looks as if he'd got his death-blow."

Now the listener was one of those vigorous women to whom sickness seems rather a contemptible frailty, besetting the unlucky ones of her sex, and death a distant possibility only dwelt upon by the morbid-minded. With her keen enjoyment in the present and her freedom from ailment, Miss Harry could not, despite the best will in the world, sympathize with the dark side of life, and holding out her flowers to the servant, she exclaimed:

"Dear me, how sad! Put these on the body, will you? I shall write to Mrs. Nister to-morrow, and must hurry home now, for it is getting so late. I'm very sorry for you all, Nanny."

Nanny's rejoinder, if she had any to make, was choked in sobs. She had lived with the Nisters since Chérie's birth, took the joys and sorrows of the Vicarage household for her own, and was in consequence looked upon as a necessary portion of that household.

"Some folks is hard made and some soft," muttered she, shutting the door, from which it may be gathered that the departing caller was no favourite with Nanny.

The Lassing sisters wrote in turn to Hulbert as a kind of sacred duty, not to mention the pleasure, and in the next letter its writer casually mentioned Chérie's unexpected death among other items of home news. It is fair to add that nobody at

Easton knew Hulbert's secret, which was only guessed by the mourning mother at Sandyside because his name was the last word on her daughter's lips. A reply was long in coming, and instead of making it, as usual, public property, Polly, the favourite sister, to whom it was addressed, read it to herself in silence.

"Hulbert has been ill," she said presently, "very ill," and, bit by bit, the whole truth leaked out to satisfy curiosity, which showed itself in countless questions. Mr. Lassing said least and perhaps felt most.

"Poor lad," said he tenderly. "Well, most of us have to go through it some time, and there's plenty of life before him, so he'll get over it."

* * * * *

Seven years passed, and once more came the rare unwelcome tidings of Hulbert's sickness. It was fever, and he must go home to recruit, being unfit for service. The Lasses welcomed their brother with mixed feelings, for he was a mere wreck of his former self, and careful nursing for an indefinite time would be needed to restore health, to say nothing of strength.

In the early days of summer Hulbert returned to Easton, where love and attentions of every kind were lavished upon him, but alas! in vain. Through the long sunny days he lounged in the garden, or crept about his old haunts with the same ready smiles and words as usual; yet it became clear to all that he grew gradually, steadily worse, instead of better. Presently the garden had to be exchanged for the sofa, and then he became too weak to leave his room, though the sick man's interest never flagged in all that went on. The Lasses clung to this as a good sign, hoping against hope; and Polly was the only one who knew that though Chérie Nister's name never passed Hulbert's lips, she was seldom absent from his thoughts.

"Polly can hold her tongue," he used to say, "and that's a rare virtue with women."

June roses shed their petals in scented showers along the Rectory garden; hay was carried and corn crops turned to gold in the eye of the August sun. Still Hulbert lingered, as though loth to leave a world that held for him so much beauty and love. But the tall, fine form was wasted, breathing became laboured with the least exertion, and it wrung the hearts of the watchers to see how low the sands of life were running.

"Don't fret, girls," whispered the invalid after a more restless night than usual, "and you need not walk about as if you had list round your shoes, for noise does not hurt me."

This mild effort at a joke did not raise a smile on Polly's face as she sat by the window knitting warm stockings for the brother who would never wear them. She glanced up with eyes full of woe, rather surprised at the sudden breaking of a silence which had lasted so long that she hoped Hulbert was asleep.

"We will not fret, dear," she said gently, "for father's sake," and Polly meant it, though she hurriedly passed a hand across her eyes because there was a dimness in them, the dimness of gathering tears, which had sprung up unbidden, and must not be allowed to fall.

A little to the left of the bed, on a carved bracket, stood a clock, and to this Hulbert constantly turned, as if waiting till the hand reached a wished-for hour. "What day is this?" he inquired presently, and the words were so faint that Polly dropped her work in her lap to listen.

"The third of September," was the reply.

"Ah, the day my Chérie went—and—it is nearly eleven—she died then. It is time for me to go—she is waiting."

Before this broken speech ended Polly was stooping over her brother with heart beating wildly in an agony of fear, and the next minute she pulled the bell-rope. At once, from different parts of the house at the sound of that startling peal, crept the sisters; and Mr. Lassing, with bowed head, knelt close to his most treasured child, speechless, though the tightly-clasped hands and moving lips showed that he was absorbed in prayer.

Slower, fainter, came the gasping breath, and Hulbert glanced on all who waited round him, though he seemed unable to do more. The morning sun streamed unchecked through a wide open window and bathed the dying man in a flood of light—birds were singing, all nature spoke of joy, as if chiding the short-sightedness of human sorrow, and the Lasses stood on without word or tear at Hulbert's side. Soon—very soon—the clock struck, and each deep bell-like note was as a knell to the hopes of the listeners: to all, indeed, except one, over whose face flickered a gladsome smile.

"Chérie," whispered he, and his eyes wandered for an instant to the window, as if they saw beyond the sunshine that entered

there. Then they closed, but the smile remained, and so gently did the spirit leave the body that the watchers lingered for some time before they certainly knew their brother was at rest.

Not many hours later Mrs. Nister called to inquire, and, by a curious coincidence, she too sent up the flowers she happened to be carrying, that they might be laid on the body of the man her daughter loved. The flowers were chiefly sprays of lapageria, and, as Mrs. Nister turned away in tears from the house of mourning, her first thought was of the happy meeting in the land beyond the veil, where love has its full fruition.

When spring next woke the world to life a tombstone was seen in Easton churchyard, the exact counterpart of another three miles off at Sandyside. In the words upon them there was a trifling difference, the name on the former one being Hulbert, and on the latter Chérie. At this people whispered much and wondered a little ; only, since it concerned them not, explanation is needless. Besides, since this visible life ends for the most part with a tombstone, it is time that we lay aside the pen and say no more.

NOTE.—The truth of the above can be vouched for by the writer.

Into Temptation.

By A. PERRIN.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

MR. PIERCE'S VISIT.

"Take a straw and throw it up into the air, and you may see by that which way the wind is."—*J. Selden.*

WHEN the Careys returned from church they were amazed to find me sitting in the garden, deep in conversation with a stranger ; but when I introduced him as the Mr. Pierce who had corresponded with Mr. Carey over my affairs, they at once invited him to stay "and share their mid-day meal," as they called their one o'clock dinner.

So Tom was hunted for, and made to put in an unwilling appearance, for he had all a school-boy's horror of visitors ; and then we trooped into the dining-room and took our places round the table, including Patty Carey the elder child, who was allowed to have her dinner downstairs on Sundays.

I sat silent as Mr. Carey began sawing sadly away at the enormous joint of roast beef in front of him. I was thinking of the first time I had been in that room—how Andrew had placed a chair for me next his own, and how he had found fault with the Carey children, whose sticky fingers I vividly remembered, as well as a hundred other trifles that I had never thought of since. What ages ago it seemed ! And yet it was barely a year.

My recollections were brought to an abrupt conclusion by a scream from Miss Patty, who unfortunately was seated next to Tom, an opportunity he had taken advantage of, to confiscate her silver mug, untie her blue silk sash, and help her largely to salt, until her pent-up feelings found relief in a yell.

"*Patty !*" exclaimed Mrs. Carey reproachfully, who had not noticed the tricks Tom had been up to. And finding herself unjustly reprov'd, poor Patty's face screwed itself up for a cry, which was only warded off by the timely removal of Tom to a seat next my own, after which all went well for a time. Mr.

Pierce talked principally to me. Mr. Carey's attention was so engrossed in his carving, and his wife's with the manner in which Patty was holding her spoon, that conversation with either of them was rather up-hill work.

I had a great many questions to ask about our mutual friends at Kuttahpore, and learnt that Mrs. Herring and Chatty had gone to Simla soon after I left, just for the hot season, where nobody returned their calls, much to their rage and indignation.

How the Argles had at last been transferred to a large station, and how she had departed from Kuttahpore in delight, leaving poor Mr. Cassell, without the slightest compunction, to pine away in grief.

How little Mr. Costello had nearly died owing to a surfeit of native vegetables, and how the new collector had kept on old Nazuf Ali and altered and improved our house beyond recognition.

"What made you come down here so soon?" I asked. "Are you staying with relations?"

For the first time during my acquaintance with Mr. Pierce, I saw him change colour and look rather embarrassed.

"I had never seen Bournemouth," he said, "and I thought you would probably be down here; so I came to look you up."

"It was very good of you," I said, feeling sure that there was something more in Mr. Pierce's visit to Bournemouth than the object of seeing the place and looking me up, but as he seemed reserved on the subject, I refrained from asking any more questions, though I was burning with curiosity.

Perhaps he was engaged to some girl in the place. Nothing else would bring a man down so far from London directly he landed, unless his relations lived there, which I knew was not the case.

Somehow the idea did not please me. I was certain very few girls would be good enough for Mr. Pierce, and he was sure to throw himself away on some little fool who was incapable of appreciating him. I began to consider myself rather injured and hurt that he had not confided in me, after having allowed me to lay bare all my thoughts and feelings to him.

"Mother, mother," said Patty, interrupting something Mrs. Carey was saying to Mr. Pierce, "may I go on the sands tomorrow?" "No," put in Tom, and Patty glared viciously at him while she continued to repeat her request.

"Perhaps, dear," said her mother, turning round, "if it's fine. I don't see why we shouldn't all go out and have a little picnic."

"Oh, yes," I said. "Won't you come too, Mr. Pierce, or would it be too stupid for you?"

Most likely he would refuse, he would want to be with "the girl;" but to my surprise he said he should be delighted, and it was arranged that he should come up and join us at the house the following afternoon.

"It may not be fine," croaked Mr. Carey.

"Oh," said Patty, with a long face, "I hope it won't rain."

"You must ask God to make it fine, in your prayers to-night," said Mrs. Carey gravely.

"But, mother," replied Patty, "I asked God to make it fine last time we were going to have tea out of doors, but it was so wet."

"You'd better ask the devil this time, then," said Tom, unable to resist the remark after it had occurred to him, and making no attempt to conceal his satisfaction at the horror depicted on the faces of the Carey family.

I wondered what Mr. Pierce meant to do after dinner; I could hardly expect him to stay any longer, and yet I felt I had not seen half enough of him in spite of the fact that he was coming with us the next day. It was so nice meeting him again, and he seemed to like me very much better now than he had done at Kuttahpore, where he had always been finding fault with me. As it was, he had not said one disagreeable thing since he had arrived at the Vicarage.

"Are you coming to afternoon service, Josephine?" inquired Mrs. Carey, as we rose from the table when dinner was over.

"I think I ought to go and see Aunt Addie," I said.

"Oh!" exclaimed Mr. Pierce hurriedly, "would you mind my coming too? I should like to know your aunt so much."

"Of course," I replied, rather surprised at this intense desire to make Aunt Addie's acquaintance; "we may as well walk, it's not very far."

"You couldn't take the carriage out on Sunday, anyway," said Mrs. Carey reprovingly; "and what about Tom? Will you take him with you, or will he come to church with us?"

Mrs. Carey very rarely actually addressed Tom, which incensed him against her more than ever; his dignity was easily hurt, and he

had never forgiven her for omitting to ask him to tea, as well as myself, nearly a year ago.

"I think I should prefer *not* to go to church with Mrs. Carey," he said, pointedly addressing me; "I intend to go for a walk by myself." And giving the unlucky Patty a flick with his nails on the top of her head, which caused her to scream with fury, he left the room to follow his own devices.

"I'm afraid Tom's manners are very bad," I said apologetically, as we all went out into the garden.

"He's sure to get on in the world," remarked Mr. Pierce drily; "he seems to have plenty of cheek, and there's nothing like it for fighting one's way."

We sat in the garden till it was time for afternoon church, when the Careys went into the house to put on their things, and Mr. Pierce and I were left alone.

"Shall I go and get ready to start for Ivy Villa?" I said lazily, without moving.

"No," said Mr. Pierce, tilting his hat over his eyes, "there's plenty of time."

"Don't you want to go and see any one else here?" I inquired.

"Any one else?" echoed Mr. Pierce. "Is that a hint for me to go?"

"No," I answered half laughing; "but I don't think you've treated me quite fairly. I've told you everything about myself, and you've never said a word to me about your own life."

"My father was a colonel in a cavalry regiment, and my mother was a lady. I was educated at Harrow, and got into the Bengal Civil Service. I've got two old maid sisters, and my parents are both dead. So there! And now what has that got to do with my wanting to call on any one but your aunt?"

"I thought there *must* be somebody else."

"Why?"

"Oh! Because a man doesn't rush down to a place like this directly he lands, for nothing."

I felt I was pumping him in the most unwarrantable manner.

"But I haven't come down here for nothing," said Mr. Pierce.

"Then there *is* some one!" I exclaimed eagerly.

"What do you mean?"

"There now!" I said crossly, for the mystery annoyed me

intensely ; " you're just as aggravating as ever. You wouldn't have come all this way just to see Bournemouth, or merely on the chance of finding me here. I might have been at the North Pole for all you knew. You must be engaged to somebody down here."

Mr. Pierce burst out laughing.

" What a mass of curiosity you are ! " he said.

" But tell me. *Are* you ? "

" I'll tell you to-morrow," he said.

My spirits sank. There was something intensely mortifying to me in the idea of Mr. Pierce being engaged, and now he had as good as admitted the fact.

Why had he told me nothing about the girl who was to be his wife, or offered to introduce her to me ? My feelings were deeply hurt, my curiosity baffled and, I could not but own it to myself, my jealousy aroused. I should not have minded it at all, I thought, if he had been open with me, and told me all about it from the first, but he had behaved abominably in keeping it all so quiet, and I considered that I had every right to feel very much offended. I rose from my seat and announced stiffly that I meant to get ready to go to Ivy Villa, and joined him afterwards in front of the house in anything but an amiable temper. I resisted the temptation to ask him more questions, telling myself that his affairs possessed no interest for me at all, since he was evidently so adverse to my knowing anything about them.

We talked very little as we sauntered slowly along in the direction of Ivy Villa. Mr. Pierce was never a talkative man, and the mood I was in, combined with the sultry heat and glare of the white road, disinclined me for conversation.

We found Aunt Addie being paraded about the garden in her bath chair, with a long gauze veil tied over her hat and flowing voluminously round her.

Directly she caught sight of us she began coughing feebly, and allowed one hand to droop gently down outside the chair, as if the effort to hold it up was too great for her frail strength.

" Oh ! how d'you do ? " she said faintly, as I introduced Mr. Pierce. " I am *such* an invalid, as I daresay my niece has told you, that I am unable to move from my chair, so you must excuse

my talking to you out here. You must walk about by the side of the chair, both of you, as I shall catch cold unless I keep moving."

Mr. Pierce and I stationed ourselves one on each side of Aunt Addie's chair, and slowly perambulated up and down the gravel walks while we talked to her.

"And what are you doing in England?" she asked Mr. Pierce, somewhat suspiciously. "I cannot understand any one in his right mind voluntarily leaving the heat of India to come into this abominable climate."

"One must have a change sometimes," said Mr. Pierce apologetically, for Aunt Addie had spoken in the most hostile tone, as if daring him to contradict her, and I was sure she was quite disappointed that he had not done so.

"How long do you stay at Bournemouth?" she inquired.

"It depends on circumstances," said Mr. Pierce, with a mysterious air, which enhanced Aunt Addie's curiosity to an almost unbearable extent.

"Really! and with whom are you staying?" she went on inquisitively.

"I'm at an hotel," said Mr. Pierce.

"Oh! and have you many friends here?"

"Not many."

Aunt Addie was furious. For some reason of her own she desired to find out all she could about Mr. Pierce, and having her curiosity baffled, annoyed her extremely.

"Dear me!" she said presently, "how very silly of me! I've forgotten my smelling-bottle. I can't imagine how I was so foolish, for I so often faint from exhaustion that it's most dangerous for me to be without it." She paused, and looked at Mr. Pierce, and then said in a feeble voice:

"*Might* I trouble you to go into the house for it, Mr. Pierce? It's on the drawing-room table; but please remember to shut the hall door behind you as you come out."

Mr. Pierce went off on his errand, and Aunt Addie attacked me about him at once.

"Who is he?"

"He was under Andrew at Kuttahpore, and was very kind in helping me to wind up my affairs when he died."

"Oh! well, all I can say is you ought to be more careful.

It's most imprudent, not to say improper, his coming here to see you, and your letting him walk all over the place with you. I never heard of such a thing! If you intend to marry him, say so at once, but don't expect me to take that awful boy Tom back, for I won't do it; I should die in a month."

Aunt Addie became decidedly incoherent, and began sniffing angrily at her smelling-bottle, which she had known perfectly well was in her lap all the time.

"You need not be nervous, Aunt Addie," I said quickly, for Mr. Pierce was returning from his fruitless search in the house. "Mr. Pierce does not want to marry me, and whatever happens you shall never be burdened with Tom again."

"I'm very glad my fears were unfounded, my dear Josephine," said Aunt Addie tearfully. "I could never bear to see you the wife of that murderous-looking individual. I hope he isn't a thief in disguise. If he's taken anything out of the drawing-room ——"

"I couldn't find the bottle, and I see you have it in your hand," said Mr. Pierce, behind the chair, in the middle of her speech, and Aunt Addie gave a loud scream of fright and surprise, as she had not seen him approaching.

I felt irresistibly inclined to laugh, and seeing by the expression of his face that Mr. Pierce was in the same condition as myself, I hastily said good-bye, promising to look in again soon.

"It's much too early to go in yet," he said, as we closed the gate behind us; "are you up to a walk?"

"Oh, yes; I'm quite strong again now; I should like a short walk."

We strolled along in silence for a few minutes.

"Mr. Pierce," I said presently, moved by a sudden impulse, "won't you tell me who you are engaged to?"

"I'm not engaged at all," he said quietly.

I stood still and stared at him.

"Why, you told me you were."

"I beg your pardon. If you will think for a moment, you will remember that I never made any such statement."

This was said with more of the old disagreeable inflection in his voice than I had heard all day.

"I certainly thought you were, but I'm very glad to hear you are not," I said, in a tone of satisfaction.

"You are glad? Why?"

I hardly knew what to say.

"I think it would be difficult for you to find any one to suit you."

"Do you think I should be hard to get on with?" he asked anxiously.

"Yes; I do think so. You would expect too much of your wife. She would have to be an absolute prig to please you."

I knew this was an untrue, as well as a disagreeable, speech, but I could not resist it. Mr. Pierce's perfections were the one thing about him that aggravated me.

"I don't see what grounds you have to go on for such an idea," he said, rather resentfully. "I don't think I am more intolerant than my fellow-creatures."

"Yes, you are," I said, with an air of conviction, feeling a delight in finding fault with him; "you have no sympathy with people who have less strength than yourself to resist doing wrong."

As I said this a scene rose up in my mind of two figures, myself and Mr. Pierce, pacing the gravel walk outside the collector's house at Kuttahpore, and I could hear his kind honest voice saying, "Poor child, I'm awfully sorry for you."

If there was no sympathy in that tone, then there was none in the world at all, and I looked away towards the sinking sun, feeling sorry for what I had said, all the more so as I was afraid I might have hurt Mr. Pierce very deeply.

"I have no means of proving that you are wrong just at present," he said, rather coldly; "and perhaps you are right. One never knows one's own faults as well as other people do."

Apparently my words had fallen harmlessly enough. I was glad I had not offended him, but with my usual unaccountable perversity, I felt a little disappointed that he had not been angry. It was such a novel experience to lecture Mr. Pierce, and I had enjoyed doing it immensely, though I was afraid to pursue my advantage any further.

We had walked idly along, not noticing where we were going,

till we found ourselves opposite the Vicarage porch, under which Tom was standing, so our *tête-à-tête* came to an abrupt end, for Tom, having overcome his shyness of the visitor, attached himself to us until Mr. Pierce said good-bye, and went off, promising to put in an early appearance the next afternoon.

CHAPTER XXXV.

NOW OR NEVER.

“To be, or not to be ; that is the question.”—*Shakespeare*.

I WOKE up the next morning to find that it was a hopelessly wet day.

Our outing was knocked on the head, and of course Mr. Pierce would never think of coming to the house, knowing that it would be impossible to carry out the programme. Patty was almost in tears all the morning over her disappointment, and Tom made her worse by perpetually suggesting that her not having said her prayers properly must be the cause of the wet day ; until Mr. Carey, roused out of his usual stern apathy, ordered him to be silent, and threatened to make him do some Latin, which had the effect of quickly ridding us of his presence. Where he went we neither asked nor cared to know : we were only too thankful to get rid of him. Mrs. Carey settled herself in the dining-room with an enormous basket of mending in front of her, meaning to make the most of the wet day. She must have found me anything but an agreeable companion, for I kept going to the window every five minutes to see if there was any chance of the rain clearing off ; but it looked hopeless, and poured steadily down in a continuous soaking torrent.

“I suppose there’s no chance of Mr. Pierce coming,” I said, with a little hesitation.

“My dear Josephine, no one would dream of coming out on a day like this. If he comes here to-morrow we must plan another excursion.”

The morning dragged on as if it would never come to an end, and when, at last, dinner was ready, none of us were hungry (except Tom), through having had no fresh air or exercise to give us an appetite.

“I think I *must* go out for a walk,” I said in desperation, when

three o'clock came and still no break in the clouds. "Will you come with me, Tom?"

"No," said Tom bluntly; "I'd rather not."

So I was forced to set out alone, and, clothed in a waterproof coat and a felt hat, I marched rapidly down the road, regardless of the rain, and only too thankful to get out into the air.

Presently a cab passed me and then stopped, and looking back I saw Mr. Pierce with his head out of the window, hailing me energetically.

"Where on earth are you going?" he said, opening the cab door. "You'll be drenched! I was on my way up to see you. Do get in and let me take you back."

"No," I said firmly; "I came out for a walk and I must have some exercise."

"Then I'll come too," he said, getting out and paying the cabman. "I've got a mackintosh here."

He put it on and we started off briskly.

"Do you know, such an awful thing's happened," he said. "Young Daintry has shot himself at Monte Carlo."

"What!" I exclaimed in horror. "It can't be true."

"I'm afraid it is. It's in some of the papers already, and I heard of it through a friend of mine who was there. You know he took six months' leave? Well, he went straight there and gambled night and day, they say, and now this is the result. I suppose he couldn't meet his losses, or something of that kind; I don't know exactly what. You know, nice boy as he was, he was always inclined to be wild."

"I suppose he must have been," I said with a sigh, "but somehow I never believed it. I always thought his brother misjudged him; anyway, I think if his mother had been fonder of him he might have had more chance."

I told Mr. Pierce of the conversation I had had with poor Douglas that night in Mrs. Argles' verandah.

"I saw him walking home with you," said Mr. Pierce.

"And I wished you had not been outside your house at that particular moment," I remarked.

"Did you? Why?"

"I thought you might think it so queer to see me walking with Mr. Daintry in the middle of the night."

"Did you mind what *I* should think individually, or would it have been the same if Mr. Costello had seen you, for instance?"

"I suppose I minded you more than Mr. Costello," I said laughing.

"How much longer do you intend to stay down here?" he asked presently.

"I must stay till Tom goes, I suppose. He wants to go in a few days to stay with some schoolfellow for the rest of the holidays. Directly he gets off, I shall pack up my own traps."

"Where do you mean to go?"

"To London, of course," I answered joyously. "Do you suppose I could stay on here with seventeen hundred a year and absolute independence? Why, it would drive me mad."

"And when you get to London?"

"Oh, I've promised myself the most *perfect* existence. I mean to take a flat and furnish it. I have made all my plans. I shall stay in London till I'm tired of shopping, and going to the theatre, and sight-seeing, and then I shall shut up my flat and be off to Paris."

There was no response. I looked up at Mr. Pierce, but his face was set and hard, and he evidently strongly disapproved of my scheme.

We had arrived on the brink of the cliff, and seeing a little narrow path that led down to the sands, I suggested that we should follow it.

"I like to look at the sea in the rain," I said.

"The sands will be so wet," objected Mr. Pierce.

"We can't be wetter than we are already," I urged, "and when we get down there we may find some dry place under the cliff where we can sit down."

I began to climb down the path, Mr. Pierce following me with his eyebrows drawn into a ferocious frown till they met over his nose. He was apparently thinking deeply over something, for he never offered to assist me in my descent. Probably he was preparing a lecture on my frivolous tastes, which I should get the full benefit of when we reached level ground again.

At the foot of the path was a tiny cave in the cliff, which looked as if it had been made for two people to take shelter in, and I entered it and sat down on the dry sandy floor to watch Mr. Pierce coming down the path I had just left.

"Come in here," I called out ; "it's beautifully dry, and you can see the sea splendidly."

He entered the little cave and threw himself down on the ground by my side, without considering the fine golden sand which stuck to his damp clothes wherever they touched it.

"We shall catch our deaths of cold," he grumbled. "What on earth would your aunt say if she could see us?"

"Seeing me here wouldn't affect her in the least, so long as we didn't expect her to join us," I said. "That's one of the great comforts of my present existence, that I can do exactly what I please without causing trouble to a soul. You can never really enjoy yourself when you have other people's feelings to consider."

"You're talking nonsense," said Mr. Pierce crossly.

"It's exactly what you said to me yourself one day at Kuttahpore."

"I was in a very different state of mind then to what I am now."

"Well, you can't expect me to suit my conversation to your moods, now, can you?"

I spoke in a light chaffing tone, but he did not smile or answer me back as I had expected. He was leaning his cheek on his hand and looking straight out across the tossing green and white sea before us.

"What are you thinking about?" I asked.

"I've got something to say to you," he replied, "and I was wondering if I had better say it now, or wait till my leave is nearly over."

"Say it now, by all means, unless it's something very disagreeable."

"Don't be flippant, Josephine ; it's something serious."

I looked quickly at him. He had called me by my Christian name, a thing he had never done before. What *could* he be going to tell me?

"Please say it quickly," I said, feeling rather frightened. "You're making me quite uncomfortable."

"It's this, then," he said, looking me straight in the face. "Will you marry me?"

I was struck dumb with amazement. It had never crossed my mind that Mr. Pierce would ever propose to me. I had always been under the impression that he liked me well enough, but at

the same time rather despised me for my weakness and selfishness ; for I knew he could read my character like an open book.

And now here he was asking me to be his wife ! I was conscious at first of a wave of triumph and elation passing through my mind, in which there was mingled a certain amount of genuine gladness ; but I was too surprised to speak, and absolutely did not know whether I wished to accept him or not.

"Well?" he said presently, never taking his eyes off my face.

"Do you *mean* it?" I asked incredulously.

"Is it likely that I, of all men, should ask you such a question if I did not really mean it?" he said with a little gesture of impatience. "I have known my own mind about you ever since I first saw you, and God only knows what I have gone through to hide it, and yet you ask me if I mean it!"

"It seems so impossible."

"What? That you could marry me?"

"No; your wanting me to be your wife. I thought you looked down on me, especially since—since that evening at the Herrings'."

"Dear," he said gently, "don't think about that wretched business; I understood it all perfectly, and though you were wrong——"

"Yes, that's just it," I exclaimed quickly. "You would always know when I was wrong and tell me, and I should never feel at my ease with you. You are much too good for me, and knowing how good you are, and how much better than myself, my life would be one long struggle to live up to your level. I couldn't do it; I should end by being afraid of you and deceiving you."

"Josephine! How foolish you are. You would have endless faults to correct in me," he said gravely.

"No. That is the worst of you. You don't seem to have any. It would be like living with a clergyman."

He laughed out loud.

"How blind you are!" he said. "You must like me a little bit to think me such a mass of perfection. Don't you know that I've got the vilest temper on the face of the earth?"

"Then you manage to control it very easily."

"Indeed, you little know," said Mr. Pierce wearily. "There seems something childish in a man of my age and experience

having to do battle with his own temper to the extent I have to sometimes. I despise myself because I can't master it as I should like to."

"If you weren't an exceptionally good man you wouldn't try. Who ever thinks about their temper?"

"You don't understand what I mean. I try to conquer my failings by strength of will, and because I will not be beaten by them, and that is a sin in itself, because it is doing right from a wrong motive. I do what is right very often because I *will not* be conquered by temptation. It's such miserable weakness not to be able to hold out against oneself! You seem to have an idea that I'm a kind of walking sermon, when I'm fully conscious that nine times out of ten I do what is right, not so much from the *desire* to do so, as to prove that I have the force of will to carry out by myself what many others can only do with the help of their religion. It is hard to explain, without seeming *utterly* irreligious, which I don't think I am, or the matter would not trouble me."

I looked doubtfully at him. I could not make out whether this was a confession of weakness or a parade of strength of mind. At any rate it made no difference in my feelings. I knew I was unwilling to accept him, and yet I could not make up my mind to refuse him. If I let him go I might find myself longing and craving to see him, and be near him again, and if I married him my own will would be gone for ever, his was so infinitely stronger than mine; and besides this I should have to give up my freedom, and my money, and the delights I had promised myself, and go back to be buried alive at Kuttahpore. Would Mr. Pierce make up for it all?

"Kuttahpore is so awful," I said, after a long silence.

"That is very easily remedied," he said. "I could get a transfer at once, and am pretty sure of getting a good district. Will you come back with me or not?"

Partly from curiosity I longed to put my hand in his and tell him I would be his wife. I could not help wondering what he would do, and how he would look. I could hardly believe he was in love with me, and yet there shone a clear earnest light in his eyes that made my heart beat, and kept me from uttering the "no" that hovered on my lips.

It would be so hard to give up my long-dreamt-of indepen-

dence, to forego my flat and my luxurious travelling, and all I had meant to see and do.

I was sure I could never be a model wife to any man, but at the same time I felt certain that Mr. Pierce was the only man I *could* marry if I did so again at all. If I accepted him, either he or I must be miserable, I in straining to be good enough for him, or he in seeing me indulge my weaknesses and yield to my temptations.

"Look here, Josephine," he said, "I have taken you by surprise, I can see, though I thought when I spoke that you knew I cared about you. Think it over till to-morrow. You can meet me here if you like, or anywhere, and give me your answer. If you refuse me I shall go back to India at once, for I shall need the hardest work I can do, but if you accept me I could extend my furlough for six months beyond what I have taken if you wished it."

He took both my hands in his.

"Do you care for me at all, dear?" he said.

"Oh! how can I tell?" I cried, the tears welling into my eyes. "One minute I feel as if I couldn't live without you, and the next I think it would be madness to give up my freedom and all my plans. Must I decide now? Won't you let me wait a year before I give you my answer?"

"No, I will not wait a year, Josephine, or even a week. If you don't know your own mind by to-morrow, I don't think you ever will. You know me thoroughly, and if you like your money and your freedom too well to give them up till a year has passed, you must let me go. You cannot cultivate the good you have in you by going away to gratify every desire and whim of the moment, and the more you cultivate the bad the less you will like the idea of the kind of life I have to offer you. I love you very dearly, but you must either give yourself to me now without the shadow of a doubt, or you must let me go."

I felt exceedingly angry with him, and almost refused him then and there. It was most humiliating to be denied my request for a year to think the matter over (or, to be strictly honest, to enjoy myself), and to be told point-blank that if I could not make up my mind then, he would not have me at all.

I could not bring myself to refuse him and decide my fate

then and there, so I finally agreed to meet him the following afternoon at the edge of the cliff, where the path ran down to the little cave, and give him an answer one way or the other, and then we walked back in the still pouring rain to the Vicarage.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

YES OR NO?

“Look, then, into thine heart.”—*Longfellow.*

WE walked back in silence to the Vicarage, where Mr. Pierce left me, after we had arranged to meet again the following evening at the edge of the cliff where the little path led down to the cave. It was characteristic of him that, since my decision was yet unmade, he never pressed my hand at parting, or showed by even a look or sign that he had just asked me to be his wife. I had almost expected that he might want to kiss me as we stood there in the shadow of the porch, rendered still gloomier by the cloudy sky and steadily falling rain. I felt it would have gone a long way in my mind towards turning the scale in his favour, but he was evidently determined that my decision should be due to no sudden impulse or emotion of the moment; my choice was to be deliberate and voluntary.

And so we calmly said good-bye to one another, and I went up to my room to change my wet things, after which I sat on my bed for nearly an hour thinking over my position. A great crisis in my life had arrived, my future rested more or less in my own hands, and I was tortured and torn by doubts and perplexities. I knew Mr. Pierce to be a good, true, honest gentleman, if ever there was one, and that his influence in my life would change me for the better, as nothing else could. I was not sure whether I was in love with him. I fancied I was too much afraid of him for that, but I told myself that I would have married him gladly and willingly had I felt that I was morally his equal. At last I made up my mind to confide in Caroline Carey, and ask her advice, so, going down to the dining-room, I found her sitting contentedly alone in front of a cheerful little fire sipping a cup of tea.

“Ah! Here you are at last,” she said as I entered the room. “You must be perished. I found it so cold with all this rain that

I had the fire lighted, and ordered some tea. Sit down here comfortably and have a cup."

I took the tea, and sat staring thoughtfully at the little yellow flames dancing so energetically over the coals.

"I met Mr. Pierce out, and we went for a walk," I began abruptly. Mrs. Carey lifted her eyebrows.

"Do you think you're wise to encourage him, Josephine?" she said, with some hesitation. "I can't help fancying he's fond of you, and even if you like him in return, it's too soon yet to think of anything like that."

"I was just going to ask your advice on that very subject."

"Do you mean to say he *has* proposed to you?"

I nodded my head.

"And have you accepted him?" she asked anxiously.

"Not yet. I'm to give him my answer to-morrow. Caroline, *do* try to put yourself in my place and tell me what to do. He really is a good man, and I'm sure would make the best of husbands, but he's *too* strait-laced; you've no idea how strict and honourable he is. I'm *afraid* to marry him!"

"Dear me," said Caroline, completely bewildered; "I can't understand what you mean. I should have thought the more upright and honourable you found a man, the more you would wish to marry him, if you had any inclination to do so to begin with."

"But I'm not at all sure that I want to be good," I said, regardless of Mrs. Carey's feelings, "and I should *have* to be if I married Mr. Pierce. Good people are always in a state of mental discomfort either on their own account or other people's. Then there's the money and the independence; it's a lot to give up! If I don't marry him I shall gain the whole world and lose my soul alive, as your husband would probably put it."

"Good gracious, Josephine, what dreadful things you're saying! Why should you be wicked if you don't marry this man? You could make your home with us, and you know John would give you all the spiritual help you needed."

"No," I said slowly, "I couldn't lead a life like that if I were free. If I refused him I should go my own way and live to enjoy myself as far as my means would allow. One woman could do a lot on my income."

"Are you sure you haven't got a touch of that horrid Indian

fever?" inquired Caroline, evidently convinced that I was wandering in my mind.

"No," I laughed. "I'm only explaining matters to you. What is your advice after all? Shall I say yes or no?"

"Oh, dear!" groaned Caroline, "do let me call John; his advice would be far better than mine."

"I don't want John's advice, and please don't tell him anything about this till it's been settled one way or the other. I want to know what *you* think I had better do?"

"Well, my dear, if you really feel that Mr. Pierce is the only person who can influence you for good, by all means marry him."

"I'm sure I should make him miserable," I said argumentatively.

"He took his chance of that when he proposed to you."

"Then you would say 'yes,' if you were me?"

"I think so, if what you say is really the case. You would certainly have to give up your income, but it's not as if he were a poor man. What I can't understand is your want of confidence in yourself without him. Surely if you pray for help and guidance ——"

Here the door was flung open, letting in a flood of light, and the parlourmaid entered carrying a lamp, the Carey children following close at her heels, so that our conversation came to an end, leaving me almost as undecided as when it began, and I had no further opportunity of speaking to Caroline alone before it was time for me to start off the next afternoon to meet Mr. Pierce.

Unlike the previous day, the weather was faultless; there was scarcely a cloud in the sky, and a warm soft wind stirred the leaves on the trees that had been washed so clean and fresh by the recent rain. The sun shone brilliantly, reminding me of India—was I to go back there or not? Strange as it may seem, even as I left the Vicarage that afternoon, I had not actually made up my mind as to what my answer was to be. All night long I had lain awake thinking the matter over; one moment I had fully determined that I would marry him, for I knew I should never repent it, and the next I was equally certain that I could never bring myself to settle down as his wife. I so longed for, vulgarly speaking, a "real good fling;" to be as extravagant as I pleased, to go where the whim seized me, to be answerable to nobody for my actions. Rich, independent, young, free and

handsome (for I knew *now* what I was like)—ah! what a time was in my very grasp! I could not give it up, and yet, to keep it, I should have to say “no” to the man who was waiting for me to come to him with “yes” on my lips. As I neared the cliff I saw him walking restlessly up and down, but as he caught sight of me he turned and came hurriedly forward to meet me. Oh! *What* should I say? Was it to be yes, or no?

CHAPTER XXXVII.

MY CHOICE.

“It is too late to look back to the land,
With moorings loosed, and keel slipped from the strand.”

IT was all over at last. My choice had been made, my fate decided, and I was back in my bedroom at the Vicarage, taking off my hat in front of the glass. I was startled at my own reflection, my face looked so white and old, and my lips like a little thin red line. My heart was heavy with regret, though of my own free will I had faced Walter Pierce half an hour before in the glowing afternoon sunshine, and distinctly told him that I preferred my wealth and independence to him. He had said very little: perhaps if he had tried to plead his cause he might even then have won it, but it was not in his nature to beg or supplicate for what he wanted, and he had accepted his fate calmly and with a brave front. I might have fancied that he scarcely felt it, only his brown eyes and tightly-pressed lips showed me more clearly than words could have done that it had gone very hardly with him. But after I had told him, after we had parted in silence, though I knew I had chosen evil instead of good and my heart ached to call him back, there was a wild excitement surging in my blood which overcame the regret.

I burned to get away, to begin my new life, and sever all old ties and associations. I should have to fight out the question of my departure with the Careys, get rid of Tom (who, luckily, was simply dancing to be off to the Bartons'), bid Aunt Addie farewell, and then for the world and the realization of my fondest dreams!

There came a knock at my door, and Caroline Carey poked her head in.

"Well?" she asked, entering the room full of curiosity, and closing the door behind her.

"I've said 'no,'" I answered abruptly; "he has gone away, and I don't suppose I shall ever see him again."

"Dear me! Is it *quite* settled? Are you sure he won't come back?"

"Quite sure."

"Well, it seems rather a pity perhaps; but, after all, of course you know your own mind best. It won't make any difference, and I'm very glad we are not going to lose you."

"We must talk about that to-night," I answered, scenting a struggle, for Caroline persistently ignored the possibility of my being in earnest on the subject of leaving them.

The tea-bell came to the rescue for the present, and all through that most detestable of meals, the meat-tea, I was conscious that I talked incessantly, and also that my conversation was composed of the most unutterable nonsense, though what it was about I could not have told if I had been asked the minute afterwards. The evening seemed interminable: the scene on the cliff haunted me mercilessly, and I was impatient for change and action, to banish it from my mind. I determined to unfold my plans to the Careys before we went to bed, so after family prayers were over I began by informing Tom that I had arranged for his leaving the following morning, since "Barton" had assured him he would be welcome at any moment, so that all we had to do was to telegraph to his friend early the next day.

"You'd better pack your things to-night," I said, wishing to get him out of the room, and he tore off without saying good-night to any of us to prepare for his long-desired journey. Then I turned to Mr. Carey.

"I want to talk to you and Caroline about my plans," I began a little nervously, for I knew I should meet with opposition, and I also felt that the Careys, having been extremely kind, might with justice consider me rather ungrateful.

Caroline looked at her husband.

"What 'plans,' Josephine?" she said. "You know we both wish you to make your home with us. Where else could you live? You don't like being at Ivy Villa."

Mr. Carey bent his long narrow head in benign acquiescence.

"You're very good and kind," I said, "and always have been."

I'm *really* grateful ; but, indeed, I can't live here altogether. Though I'm young, I'm not a child, and I want to see something of the world."

"There's plenty of time for that," said Mr. Carey. "I thought we might all go abroad for a month next summer."

"I know it's very sudden," I went on, ignoring this well-meant proposal ; "but I've made up my mind to go to-morrow."

"Go where ?" inquired the Careys in a breath.

"To London."

Mr. Carey was perfectly aghast. "*What ?*" he exclaimed. "You can't go and live in London *alone* !"

"Why not ? Lots of women in my circumstances do it. I shall probably take a flat and make it my head-quarters."

"It wouldn't be right. You're much too young ; it's quite out of the question !"

I gently reminded him that I was a widow and my own mistress, and that therefore nothing could prevent my going when or where I pleased, whereupon the usually silent John Carey lifted up his voice and held forth for over half-an-hour. He told me, what was no doubt very true, that I should be walking straight into the jaws of every kind of temptation connected with the world, the flesh and the devil. He asserted that the very fact of my wishing to break away from the moral security of the Vicarage proved that I was the last person to be launched alone on the dangerous seas of life. He predicted dire and awful consequences of my folly and self-will, and compared me to the prodigal son, winding up by stating that, if nothing would induce me to alter my mind, I should always find himself and Caroline willing to take me back when I had wasted my substance, and wearied of the world's empty vanities. I had no idea that Mr. Carey possessed such eloquence out of the pulpit, and impressive though he became, he in no wise altered my determination, and at the end of his exhortation I mildly remarked that I still wished to go, and thanked him for his kind promise to take me back when I wished to return.

"Of course I'll come and see you sometimes if you'll have me," I concluded. "It isn't as if I was going to the other end of the earth ; it's only that I want to have a home of my own, and I'm sure when it's all settled you'll say I was right. *Please* don't be angry about it. I know I'm going very suddenly, but Caroline

will tell you what happened to-day, and after that I feel I *must* go."

Finally, after a little more argument and expostulation, we all retired to bed, Mr. Carey stern and unrelenting in his displeasure, Caroline half-crying, and I (though sincerely sorry to have so vexed the kind couple) with my heart beating high at the prospect of the coming change.

I released Tom the following morning from his much-hated bondage at the Vicarage, giving him a "tip," which caused him to redden with pleasure to the roots of his coarse stubbly hair, and saw him off to finish his holidays at "Barton's governor's place," the happiest boy in England.

Then I packed and labelled my boxes, and made all arrangements for leaving in a few hours; and this done, I repaired to Ivy Villa to bid Aunt Addie adieu. The stuffy little drawing-room brought the past back to me with hideous distinctness, and I rejoiced to think that I was free, and dependent on nobody but myself for happiness. Still, all the same, whenever I thought of Walter Pierce, and every time his strong manly face rose up in my mind, I felt as if a needle had been run into my heart, and tears were perilously near my eyes. I had and still loved him almost as well as myself—but not *quite*.

Aunt Addie was not the least interested in my sudden departure, and barely inquired where I was going. All she dwelt upon was my assurance that I had provided for Tom, and that in no case should he be returned to her charge; and once her mind had been set at rest on this point, she would talk of nothing but some new pills she had been recommended as a remedy for a disease she had never heard of before, but which she was now convinced she was suffering from acutely.

"Good-bye, Aunt Addie," I said at last; "I may not see you again for some time, as I shall probably go abroad for the winter. Good-bye, and please remember that I shall always bear in mind who it was took care of me when father and mother died and I was left alone in the world."

"I shan't be able to remember anything for very much longer," moaned Aunt Addie dismally. "I feel positive my time on earth is drawing to a close. Good-bye, Josephine, my dear; always be careful not to catch cold. I can only hope that you will never live to be such an invalid as your poor aunt."

I left her weeping over her misfortunes, and then there was one little thing I wanted to do before leaving the old life behind me. I meant to say good-bye to the place where I had last seen Walter Pierce ; so I walked quickly to the cliff, for I had hardly any time to spare, and stood for a minute on the very spot where I had made my choice of the two paths of life open to me. I looked vacantly out over the glittering sea as I compared them in my mind—the one so quiet, smooth and safe, protected by the strong love of a good man ; the other, perhaps stormy and dangerous, beset with snares and temptations, but sparkling and seductive, full of attractions and excitement—full of *life*. The latter was the path I had chosen. Where would it lead me in the end ?

THE END.

The Friendly Fog.

By BLANCHE YORKE.

CHAPTER I.

NANCE ELRIN sank into the spacious arm-chair in her bedroom and heaved a deep sigh. Life was difficult ; and she drew down her brows quickly over her violet eyes. Why *would* young men insist on being lovers instead of friends ! She was enjoying a visit to her friend Mrs. Doraine, in her shooting box away in Derbyshire, and it did seem too bad that her brother's friend, Bertie Kendrick, should insist on playing the devout lover every day. Ah, well ! to-night, at any rate, a new element was coming into the house. Mr. North, a barrister of no mean reputation, was expected.

When Nance thought of "home" her face darkened. There she had always been taught that the sooner she fulfilled her mission in life and met with a good *parti* the better. She had no place there. Certainly any difficulties would be smoothed over if she were to marry Bertie, and he was kind and generous, and she thought, no, she knew, he loved her.

Ah ! the first bell : she must dress, and that quickly.

A striking personality makes itself felt wherever it goes, and affects the very atmosphere around it. Miss Elrin confessed to herself at dinner that evening as she talked to the new arrival, that here at any rate was a man of strong character, and one too whom one might trust, she felt instinctively.

* * * * *

In the mornings at Rock Edge, every one went their own way as a rule, and one day Nance, in a short serge walking costume, and armed with a stick, made her escape soon after breakfast and went away over the moors for a solitary ramble.

The crisp autumn air brought colour into her cheeks as she walked with a firm step over the white roads. It was a joy to be

alive, and a pleasure to be alone with her thoughts and fancies. She went for a long way, but at length her energy began to wane and she sat on an invitingly low wall and listened to the far-away sounds of life in the region of the neighbouring cottages. "Tired, Miss Elrin?" said a voice at her back. She started to find Mr. North beside her; he had come across the field behind. Rex North was not actually a handsome man but his strong features and keen blue eyes had a charm that is beyond mere good looks; his suit of rough tweed became him too. His eyes were wonderfully fascinating; at once piercing and kind.

"I must apologize for startling you."

"Pray don't," she said with a smile; "it is only that the ground is so soft one does not hear footsteps."

"And one's thoughts are so all-engrossing," he added with a twinkle. He vaulted lightly over the wall and sat beside her.

"Ye-es," she answered, digging the end of her stick into the earth and reddening slightly. She had been considering Mr. Kendrick and many things, and somehow she had the unreasonable consciousness that her companion could read her thoughts with those strangely penetrating eyes of his. "I enjoy a walk alone now and then, don't you?" she said, meeting his glance.

"Yes, indeed. Perhaps you would rather I went on—I am rested. I think I will go," he said solemnly, and stood up.

"No, please do not," she answered, laughing. "I am very rude. As a matter of fact, I have had enough of my own thoughts, and would willingly hear some-one else's, yours, say."

He sat down again, having indeed had no intention of going, and they were soon chatting quite confidentially. At many a turn in the conversation she felt a kind of glad surprise, a feeling that in her companion there was ever a beyond which it would be interesting to explore; she herself, too, unconsciously showed at her deepest, truest and most thoughtful, under the influence of his strong, sympathetic personality.

"Then do you think every woman should work, in some way?" she asked, in answer to one of his remarks.

"Most women would be the better for having work, I think," he said. "For some, simply 'to be' is enough; they *are*, and have fulfilled their destiny."

"The pretty woman, who amuses, I suppose you mean."

"Not quite that; your sex rarely manages to combine both those charms, *I* find. When a woman does, she is irresistible. But I do think the ordinary woman would be the better for a settled occupation or pursuit to occupy her time."

"Do you know," said his hearer, with almost childish frankness, "it would be a great relief to me to take up something. I do get so sick of my life, so weary of the round of dinners and entertainments, and I have nothing to do at home. What do you think I could do?" and she bent forward and regarded him with eager eyes.

He shook his head. "That is for you to find out; I am afraid I don't know you well enough yet (with gentle emphasis) to give you any advice that would be of any use. Try to find your own bent. But one thing *do not* do for any sake!"

"What is that?"

He drew a shade nearer and looked into her soft deep eyes with an expression in his own, half-laughing, half-serious. "Don't trample your intellect in the dust and marry some in-every-way desirable man that can't understand you."

She drew herself up slightly.

"You are not offended?" he asked, in his rich low voice. "I'm afraid it sounded rather a boorish thing to say, but it does seem to me so horribly sad that women should disgrace their womanhood as they do, so often, the best of them, for a mess of pottage and a carriage and pair!"

"No oftener than you men disgrace your manhood," she retorted.

"Two blacks do not make a white" said he with a smile.

"Certainly not," she replied; "but I wish you to acknowledge that your sex is a 'black' as well as mine. How some of you with *your* brains can marry the *dolls* you do, passes my comprehension!"

He shrugged his shoulders slightly and proceeded to stand up for his sex. So the time passed, until Nance suddenly realized that it might be as well to turn her steps homeward, and think of such a mundane thing as lunch.

CHAPTER II.

MRS. DORAINE never allowed the time to hang heavily on her visitors' hands. She was always arranging some fresh amusement for them, and now *tableaux* were the order of the day—*tableaux* to which all the county was invited, and which were to be followed by a dance.

The affair took a good deal of planning, but at length everything was arranged and the date fixed. Nance Elrin had vowed she would be Florence Nightingale and wear a cheap costume that entailed no trouble, but in the end she was induced to play "Lady Betty;" the idea of dancing a gavotte, on being wound up, was too alluring. The *rôle* of Sir Harry Bellairs was appropriated by North.

The friendship between these two had made rapid strides in one short week, a week, however, in which each spent a great part of every day in the other's company.

It was the evening before the *tableaux*, and the household was considerably scattered.

"Lady Betty," said Sir Harry, "might I ask for a final rehearsal?"

"By all means," she said, smiling. "Is the coast clear in the hall?"

They found the dim square hall was empty. Her amber gown made a bright spot of colour on the polished floor.

"One, two"—and they went through the quaint, sweet dance almost silently, only, when their hands touched and their eyes met, she smiled. He thought he had never in all his life seen a lovelier face or a more graceful form.

"You will give me more than this one gavotte?" he pleaded, and his eyes looked down into hers.

"Yes, if you wish it."

"I do. I am not greedy, but will you give me three valses?"

She raised her eyebrows.

He gave the hand he held the faintest pressure. "I am going away very soon," he said softly.

"Are you? Ah, yes! So are we all," and she promised him what he asked.

Then he led her to the great arm-chair by the fireplace, for they had finished their dance.

"When do you go?" she asked, in an ordinary voice, but the idea of his going struck a chill to her heart.

"Not till Thursday."

She laughed softly. "Why did you alarm me without cause?" half-mockingly.

"Alarm is a strong word. I wish it were not too strong a one," he whispered.

"How do you know that it is?" she said gaily.

He bent his bright eyes upon her, and something in the expression of them quenched the laughter in her own. She tapped the floor nervously with her little amber shoe. Then suddenly a thought seemed to strike him and a stern look came into his face, but still he did not take his eyes off her.

"There is a question I wanted to ask you."

"Yes?" she said, startled at the change in his voice.

"Some one told me you were engaged. Is there any truth in the report, may I ask?"

She sat bolt upright, and a quick blush of anger came into her face.

"And who is your informant?"

"I would rather not tell you," shortly.

"Then may I ask the name of my *fiancé*?" still more coldly.

"Certainly. Kendrick was reported to be the happy man."

"Mr. Kendrick——" she began.

"Yes; did you call?" answered Bertie himself, coming down the staircase at that moment with an armful of miscellaneous garments. "Perhaps you could help me," he continued cheerfully, hiding well his annoyance at finding the two *tête-à-tête*. "Can a fellow wear old gold hose with a red satin coat?"

"Well, the effect would be gay, to say the least of it," said North drily. "What are you? Ah, yes—Romeo. Juliet arrives to-morrow—Miss Hawthorne," he added, as if the idea were rather a pleasant one.

"I have never met Miss Hawthorne," said Nance, more for the sake of making conversation than for anything else.

"No?" said Rex with slight animation. "You will like her. Every one does. She is charmingly pretty."

"No doubt I shall think her delightful, then," she said politely,

and made her way back to the drawing-room, feeling unreasonably put out.

From beginning to end the *tableaux* were a great success. The audience were electrified when music struck up in the distance and the two figures danced their gavotte with a grave, sweet grace. To them, though, it was not as it had been the evening before. It was as if a breath of the chill outer air had blown over them. And each was proud. She gave him the dances, later, that she had promised, and talked to him brightly and seemed her gayest self. He met her remarks with courtesy and often with a cold sarcasm that chilled her.

Early in the evening she had spent a decidedly *mauvais quart d'heure* in the library with Kendrick. He told her he loved her, and asked her to marry him. A week ago she might have said "yes;" but now another face came between them. She did not confess to herself that she loved this other; but friendship with him made life deeper and more interesting, and somehow made the idea of anything but a perfect marriage hateful to her.

It was unfortunate that Rex North and Miss Hawthorne should have happened to pass the door of the library just when poor Bertie was pleading his very best and in his most lover-like attitude.

North's face darkened as he saw the touching picture on the sofa.

"Flirt!" he muttered, too low for his companion to hear.

She raised her forget-me-not eyes to his with a light laugh. "Evidently we are *de trop*."

They walked away.

"I am afraid Miss Elrin is a sad flirt; but I believe it really is a case this time," she said, with a spice of malice in her tone.

Rex was puzzled and angry, too. Had she not told him with her own lips that the report he had heard was false? Either she was untruthful, or a most atrocious flirt. He was ashamed of himself for having had a doubt of her truthfulness. She was a flirt, then—that was almost as bad as being a liar. He had done with her. He never wished to see her false face again.

CHAPTER III.

TOWARDS the evening of the next day, Nance Elrin found herself on the platform at King's Cross. No one had come to meet her, but that was a trifle. She was not accustomed to receiving delicate attentions from her home people. She soon secured a hansom, and in ten minutes was deposited at the door of the gloomy house in Russell Square that was her "home, sweet home."

"'There's no place like home!'" she thought sometimes—no place quite *like* it, *quite* so cheerless and depressing!

She walked straight into the dining-room. Mr. and Mrs. Elrin were at dinner. He was a bald, ill-tempered looking man, a victim to the gout, which, as often happens, had settled in his *temper*.

His (second) wife, who sat opposite him, was a lady of a sallow and wrinkled countenance. She still retained her youthful figure, and delighted in pretty tea-gowns. Their reception of their daughter was characteristic.

"Shut the door, can't you?" growled Elrin *père*. "Do they think it's July?"

His daughter saw to the shutting of the offending door, and then returned to give her parents a dutiful peck on each cheek.

"Your train must be late," remarked Mrs. Elrin in her high voice. "We waited dinner for you till everything was nearly spoiled."

"Really? I am sorry," said Nance pleasantly. "I will run upstairs and take my things off as quickly as possible."

Dinner was as cheering a meal as ever. No one cared to hear whether the poor girl had enjoyed her visit to the north or not. The lady only took an interest in two subjects, dress and servants, and the gentleman's mental range did not extend much further.

But Nance had learnt to live alone long ago. Mrs. Browning's words, in "Aurora Leigh," described her state:

"I kept the life thrust on me, on the outside
Of the inner life with all its ample room
For heart and lungs, for will and intellect."

She lived her own life bravely and refused to be depressed by her surroundings. She was no mean artist, and an omnivorous reader, so that she was not dull ; but a woman with a heart and a thoughtful, imaginative nature must express herself, *must* have sympathy. She began to write informal essays on the books she read, or to follow up trains of thought suggested by them, and so she found relief in expression.

Then suddenly the idea came to her of sending something to a paper, just to test its worth. She met with success at the outset.

The editor of *Variety* gave her every encouragement, and she became a regular contributor. Then she knew the delight and relief of congenial work. She felt so independent of her own private life. She knew that if she were never again to enjoy personal happiness, there would be still much left to live for. So the winter wore on and February came with its pea-soup fogs.

Nance had spent an afternoon in shopping in spite of the fog ; it seemed hopeless to be kept indoors by it any longer. Towards five o'clock, however, it became thicker and yellower every minute. She felt half choked. The gas lamps glimmered faintly and there was an air of excommunication over the land. She did not know where she was, and decided to cross over in search of a landmark. She made a dash. There was the sound of hard breathing near, and something ran up against her. She was pulled sharply back on to the curbstone. She had had a narrow escape of being run over.

She turned to thank her rescuer. Even in the darkness the outline of his figure seemed familiar. He, too, looked hard at *her*.

Both advanced to the shop window.

He recognized her with a rush of glad surprise.

"You, Miss Elrin !" said Rex North's rich voice with a ring of genuine pleasure in it.

"Thank you for pulling me back in time," she said, as she remembered that but for him she might at that moment have been lying in the mud.

"How rash of you to venture out on such a day !"

"And equally rash of you," she laughed.

"I believe this is a restaurant of some sort," he said with

sudden inspiration. "Won't you come in and have a cup of tea before you venture any farther?"

The prospect of tea was irresistible.

They found the place almost empty and took possession of a table at the far end.

Both felt strangely light-hearted in spite of the fog. She looked lovelier than ever, he thought, in her neat costume of dark blue. She took off her gloves deliberately. As she did so, his eyes were fixed anxiously on her left hand. He sipped his tea serenely when he had seen that she wore no obnoxious diamond hoop on the third finger.

"By the way," she exclaimed suddenly, leaning forward slightly and smiling, "I have an interesting piece of news for you. Guess who is engaged! Some one who was at Rock Edge."

His blue eyes looked down into hers with no answering smile in them, but only anxiety.

"I give it up."

"Bertie Kendrick," she said, and waited for the effect of her words.

"And is the girl also of the Rock Edge party?"

He had gone rather white.

"No, certainly not," she answered quickly, and then blushed furiously as she saw his meaning; "you are *quite* mistaken," she murmured.

"Poor Kendrick!" he said, in a tone of deep commiseration.

"Why poor? Indeed, he does not need any one's pity, I assure you."

She raised her eyes and was astonished at the change a few seconds had wrought in his face. It wore an expression at once tender and amused and a smile illumined it like a flash of sunlight.

"But I *do* pity him," he persisted, leaning forward so as to get a better look at her, his eyes dancing. "You see, unfortunately I happened—er—to arrive at the door of the library one night when you and he seemed to be having rather an interesting *tête-à-tête*."

Silence. Then somehow both laughed.

"I came to a wrong conclusion that night, thank God," he said earnestly.

Something—some sudden shy impulse made her rise and say she must go. She dared not raise her eyes, but she was happy.

"You had better have a hansom," he remarked, "then there will be no more chance of your being run over." He hailed one. She held out her hand to North.

"I would rather see you safely home, if you don't mind," he said, and before waiting for her answer he sprang in and shut the door.

They drove in silence for a few minutes. Then :

"Nance," he said, in a voice which shook with the love and tenderness beneath it, "it is no good running away from me, because you see you can't get away from me. I love you. Dare I hope you can care for me?"

She could not speak, only she held out her hand to him in the darkness. He drew her into the shelter of his arms and their lips met.

"Sweetheart!" he whispered.

For a long time she did not speak. At last the passion in her found utterance and all reserve was swept away.

"Oh, Rex, Rex, do you love me? Say it again!" she cried.

And he said it.

"By the way," he said later, "you were speaking of the paper *Variety*. I know the editor."

"Really!" she said, roused to interest in something beside themselves at last. She tried to read his face, but the weather was against her.

"And is he interesting? He must be. I have had such kind, clever letters from him—indeed, we had quite a long correspondence on a variety of subjects."

Her companion grunted.

"Are you laughing?" she inquired suddenly.

"Oh, no, Heaven forbid!" said he, in a preternaturally solemn voice. "But—would you care for an introduction to your editor?"

"Yes, indeed. When will you introduce me?" she asked eagerly.

"Now, this minute," said Rex. "Darling, forgive me if you can," and he drew her to him. "I have deceived you abominably. The man's name is North—Rex North! I can't tell you

what it has been to me to keep you in sight all these months and know your thoughts on things, but I have been a brute to deceive you."

A short pause and she burst into a ringing laugh.

"Oh, you villain, how could you? How cruelly you have 'had' me!" And then the colour rushed into her cheeks and she burst out: "Now I understand it! I searched and searched and often could never find my papers. *You never published the half* of them. It was mean—mean. I shall never get over the humiliation of it," she moaned.

"Oh, yes, you will—try," he said gently.

And she tried.

"The House that Jack Built."

By DARLEY DALE,

Author of "FAIR KATHERINE," "THE VILLAGE BLACKSMITH," etc.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

ANOTHER MAIDEN ALL FORLORN.

THAT other was Miss Lydia.

The hope that had revived on the evening of Felix's last visit, only to be quenched as soon as the visit was over, had refused to be rekindled in her virgin breast, until, one day soon after the news of poor Amy's death reached the cottage, it again showed signs of life.

Miss Lydia had for days been pondering over Felix's conduct, and wondering why it was he had gone so far and then stopped short, when she overheard Miss Sophia remark to a friend :

"He is a very strict Catholic—far more strict, even, than his father."

That was it, of course. How stupid of her never to have thought of it before ! The hitch was the difference of creed. No doubt Felix was bound down by no end of laws never to marry any one who did not belong to his Church. No doubt he considered her a Protestant : he little knew how very little difference there was between them.

So thought Miss Lydia, little knowing how very great is the difference.

The next step Miss Lydia took was to wonder, since the difference was so slight, why should there be any difference at all—why, in short, should she not become a Catholic ? Every barrier would then be removed ; and since she was now convinced this was the reason Felix had not proposed to her, she made up her mind she would do so.

This resolution necessitated a great many visits to the vestry, a great many interviews with the rector—all of which Miss Lydia

thoroughly enjoyed ; also a great deal of controversial reading, which she did not enjoy at all. However, it had to be done ; the rector positively refused to let her go until she had waded through several big volumes he lent her.

Miss Lydia was very naughty at this time. She frequently went to mass, and did not always mention it when she went to confession to the rector, which she still continued to do ; but she was thoroughly enjoying herself, and in no great hurry to sever her relations with her Protestant director. That would be a great wrench, she told herself. There was no need for any great hurry, either. Felix was coming over again at Easter to stay with Mr. Lockwood. She would wait till then, and take the step she hoped would lead to her speedy marriage while he was in Jersey.

Miss Keppel was unaware of what was going on. She had been so shocked by Amy's death that she had taken very little notice of Miss Lydia's vagaries ; and then, when Mr. Lockwood returned, she was very much occupied with him and little Gladys, whom she visited every day.

It was therefore somewhat of a surprise to her when one day in Easter week Miss Lydia said to her :

"Sophy, I hope it will not make any difference to you, but I am going to be received into the Catholic Church next Monday."

"What do you mean, Lydia ? For the last fifteen years you have been dinning it into my ears that you are a Catholic. What *do* you mean ?"

"I thought I was. But I know better now. I mean I am going over to Rome," faltered Miss Lydia.

"Oh ! now I understand. Well, all I have to say is, if you do go, stay there ; don't play with fire. Don't coquette with Rome, Lydia, as you used to coquette with men."

"I am never going to coquette with any one any more," said Miss Lydia.

"I should hope not ; at your age it is time to give up such vanities, even supposing you could find some one to coquette with you, which I doubt."

"I have sown my wild oats. I am going to settle down," said Miss Lydia.

"I am glad to hear it; you have been a long time about it," returned Miss Sophia.

"Yes, but girls will be girls, Sophy."

"Girls! You ceased to be a girl a good many years ago, Lydia."

"At any rate I shall soon be one no longer," said Miss Lydia with meaning, but Miss Keppel paid but little attention to the remark, and certainly had no idea to what her sister alluded.

The following Sunday Miss Lydia put off her mourning for Amy and went to mass, where, to her delight, she descried Felix Oxburgh a few seats in front of her. Her heart beat very fast at the sight of him, but he was too much occupied with his own devotions to notice her presence; indeed, he would scarcely have recognized her as they came out of church had she not first greeted him.

She was radiant with smiles, her little faded face framed in a new bonnet with some pink in it, though not perhaps the traditional pink feather, that last resource of feminine vanity. She tripped down Bath Street by his side, for Felix had the courtesy to offer to see her to the station, though he little knew how she misinterpreted this act of politeness.

"When he hears the good news I have to tell him, he will get into the train with me," thought Miss Lydia, as she cast about in her mind for the best way of announcing the change she contemplated making in her religion.

Unconsciously Felix helped her.

"Do you often come to mass?" he asked, looking down at his little companion.

He was such a giant by the side of Miss Lydia, who was a little fairy-like creature, that he looked bigger than ever by her side.

"Yes, lately I have often been, and I shall come more often still after to-morrow," she answered mysteriously, not wishing to fill Felix's cup of joy too quickly, lest it should run over.

"Why after to-morrow?" asked Felix.

"Because to-morrow I am going to be received into the Church," said Miss Lydia.

"Are you, indeed, my dear Miss Lydia? I am delighted. That is the best piece of news I have heard for a long time. I congratulate you most sincerely," said Felix enthusiastically.

"I was right, but I was sure of it. That was the obstacle. Oh! dear, how frightened I feel. I wonder how he will propose. I wish we were at the station; I am so nervous. No, I don't; not

just yet. What shall I next say?" thought Miss Lydia as Felix, all unconscious of the hopes he was exciting, continued to congratulate her.

"There is a waiting-room at the station; we might seal our engagement there," thought Miss Lydia.

"Thank you; I—I knew you would be glad," she answered, blushing.

"I am indeed. And now that you have been so good as to confide in me, I will tell you something about myself," began Felix.

"It is coming at last. Oh! my poor fluttering heart. I shall not say 'yes' at first; I must keep him in suspense a little while, the naughty man, to punish him for all he has made me suffer," thought Miss Lydia.

"What I am going to tell you will, I daresay, surprise you," said Felix.

"Not so very much, I think," simpered Miss Lydia.

"Have you already heard it, then?" he asked, in surprise that the news had already reached Jersey, for he had not wished it spoken of.

"No, but I have seen it coming," said Miss Lydia, glancing up at her handsome escort.

"How very odd," thought Felix. "I should not have given her credit for so much observation." "I only decided, though it had been the wish of my life for some time previously, but I only decided at poor Amy's death," said Felix.

"Then there was something between them. I always suspected there was. Ah, well, men will be foolish sometimes. I have been so myself more than once. I must not be hard upon him," thought Miss Lydia.

"I fancied she had something to do with it," she answered aloud.

"How on earth came she to fancy that?" thought Felix.

"You see I had to think of my father also; but he was very good, and consented, though it is rather a blow to him to see Oxburgh pass out of our immediate family, as it must do if I leave no heir," continued Felix.

"Dear me, where shall I look? How very odd of him to speak so very plainly, and to take my acceptance for granted. I may not accept him after all. I must check him, I really

must. The conversation is becoming so very peculiar," thought Miss Lydia.

"I don't quite understand," she said primly.

"Why, you know Oxburgh can never go to a Protestant, so if I leave no heir, it must go to a distant relation, as my sisters are both Protestants. You know our priests are celibate, we cannot marry," explained Felix.

What did he mean? Was he in his right mind? "We priests"—to what was he alluding?

"I am afraid I don't understand," said Miss Lydia, her faded cheeks growing paler and her hopes sinking lower than ever.

"I beg your pardon, I thought you understood to what I was alluding. I am going to be a priest. I have already taken some of the minor orders."

"Oh!" said Miss Lydia in a very long drawn out tone, and it was all she could find to say; but luckily for her they were at the station, and only just in time to catch her train.

In the bustle of departure her confusion was covered, and Felix never knew the hopes he had raised and dashed to the ground in that interview. As the train moved out of the station Miss Lydia threw herself back in her corner of the carriage, fortunately for her an empty one, and gasped out, "Too late," as she glanced tenderly at her little gloved hand, which Felix, in his enthusiasm at her conversion, had decidedly squeezed.

"If I had only been a Catholic when he was last here, we should have been engaged; now I have driven him to eternal celibacy. Oh! foolish, foolish Lydia, what atonement can I make?"

Before she could solve this problem the train reached Saumarez, and she had to walk home, where the first thing she did was to go into hysterics, which Miss Keppel ascribed to the ceremony to be undergone the next day, as to which that good lady had very vague ideas; but she thought it probable a sheet and a candle would be involved in it.

Miss Lydia was too prostrate to come downstairs again that day; she was understood to be preparing for the ordeal to be undergone the following morning, and as Miss Keppel had heard confession formed part of the function she was not surprised.

The next morning Miss Lydia appeared dressed in black, with

a very grave air, looking, her sister mentally observed, as if she were going to a funeral.

"What time does this ceremony take place?" she inquired.

"I have promised to be at the church at eleven," answered Miss Lydia.

"Is there anything to see?" Can I come and look on?"

"Certainly not, Sophy; I shall be in the confessional most of the time."

"But, after that, surely there will be some kind of ceremony: there will be dressing up and lighting of candles; I am sure Catholics can do nothing without a candle."

"I don't know what the ceremony is; I do know I would rather you did not come; in fact I don't think you'll be admitted."

"Oh, well, I daresay I shall survive. I only hope when you come back you will look a little happier than you do now," replied Miss Keppel, to which remark Miss Lydia only answered with a sigh.

When the sisters met again at luncheon, Miss Lydia was still preternaturally grave, and still dressed in black.

"Well, Lydia, is it over? Are you a full-blown Papist now?" said Miss Keppel, who was more annoyed at this last freak of her sister's than she cared to show.

"No, it is not over; I am not yet a Papist as you call it," answered Miss Lydia.

"Oh! there is some hitch, is there?"

"I should prefer not to discuss it," replied Miss Lydia.

"Very well. May I ask where you have been all the morning?"

"With the rector."

"Why, I thought you had quarrelled with him."

"Mr. Jimpson is too saintly to quarrel with any one. I had grieved him very much, but there was no quarrel."

"I am glad to hear it. Is Rome given up, then?"

"Nothing is decided, Sophy. Nothing will be decided for a month. I have promised to wait a month; until then I do not wish to speak to any one but Mr. Jimpson on the subject. In fact I have promised him I will not."

"Umph! Well, you know your own affairs best; but I think if I had gone as far as you have done, I should have gone still further."

Miss Lydia did not answer, and no more was said on the sub-

ject ; but during the next month there was a great change observable in Miss Lydia. All the ribbons and coquettish aprons in which she had formerly delighted were put rigidly away, and she dressed in the plainest style possible, and not a scrap of colour was admitted.

She went regularly to what Miss Dorcas used to call "prayers," and she called "matins" and "evensong," every morning and evening, and five times a day she disappeared mysteriously into her own room.

Lives of the Saints and theological works took the place of the novels and poems in which she had formerly delighted ; and though she continued to play bezique in the evening, it was evidently done in a spirit of penance rather than of pleasure.

At the end of the month she announced to Miss Keppel she intended to remain in the Church of England ; but Miss Keppel was sure from her manner there was something in the background, and she wrote to Mrs. Dobson that she did not know what was in the wind, but she was quite sure Lydia intended to spring some new mine upon her some day.

Miss Lydia's next eccentricity was to spend her mornings, with the exception of those intervals for retirement before alluded to, in cutting all the embroidery and lace off her underlinen, a proceeding which completely baffled Miss Keppel, for fine linen had hitherto been one of Miss Lydia's little extravagances.

At last, about two months after Easter, Miss Lydia came in with flushed cheeks from a prolonged interview with the rector in the vestry, and completely staggered Miss Keppel with the following announcement :

"Sophy, dear, I have something to tell you. I am going to be a nun."

"A what?" exclaimed Miss Keppel, starting as if she had been shot, and looking with her keen dark eyes at the prim little figure by her side.

"A nun, Sophy. My vocation is decided."

"Listen to me, Lydia, please. Let us clearly understand each other, for I am getting tired of all this nonsense. First of all, tell me, what you are? Are you a Catholic or a Protestant?"

"Oh, a Catholic, Sophy, dear ; I never was anything else ; not a Romanist, but a Catholic," said Miss Lydia fervently.

"In plain English, a Protestant. Very well ; now there are no

such things as nuns in the Church of England ; there are sisters of mercy, I believe ; disappointed women most of them, but very good women too in their way, I daresay. Am I to understand you mean to become a sister of mercy ? ”

“ Yes, I mean to leave the world and its vanities and become a religious. I shall be wedded to the Church.”

“ A religious humbug ! In the first place you are too old, in the next you are too delicate, and lastly you will be tired of it in a month. Does Mr. Jimpson approve of this freak ? ”

“ Yes, he is sure it is my vocation.”

“ More fool he. Well, you can please yourself ; you are no longer young ; you ought to know your own mind at forty——”

“ Thank you, Sophy, dear,” interrupted Miss Lydia, before the fatal age was pronounced.

“ I don’t believe you will find any sisterhood to take a woman of your age,” said Miss Keppel.

“ Oh, yes, I shall ; Mr. Jimpson has arranged all that. You see, Sophy, my income will be a great help to any convent, and age is no consideration.”

“ Apparently, the fact that I shall have to turn out of this house and move into a smaller one to end my days in alone, is no consideration either. I have been a good sister to you, Lydia, and the least you could have done is to comfort my declining years. I am getting old now, though I am still active. In a few years I may be dependent on others ; and your duty, as I conceive it, lies here,” said Miss Keppel with more feeling than she often displayed.

“ The religious life is so much higher, Sophy.”

“ Don’t talk to me of religion ; there is no religion in it. More sins are committed under the name of religion than youth itself will have to answer for. But we won’t quarrel about it, Lydia. When do you go ? ” said Miss Keppel, wisely thinking any opposition would only strengthen Miss Lydia in her resolution.

“ Next week. I go as a postulant for three months first, and then if I am elected I shall take the white veil.”

“ Oh, well, until that three months is over I shall not give notice to leave this house. You may be back here before then,” said Miss Keppel grimly.

“ I think not, Sophy. I hope not. I am so very, very happy,” said Miss Lydia devoutly.

"Ah, you have not tried it yet. I will wait till you have been there a month, and then hear what you have to say. By the way, I don't know if you will take any interest in so mundane a matter, but I have just heard Major Graham's engagement with Miss Oxburgh is broken off."

Miss Keppel took a malicious pleasure in this announcement, for when the regiment first came to Jersey, Major Graham had been rather attentive to Miss Lydia, who in return had fancied herself in love with him, and for a short time had spent her money on Noah's arks, tops and dolls for his children.

Miss Lydia started visibly at the news, and blushed to her temples.

"They say he looks miserable, but I daresay he will find some one to console him. The heart is soonest caught in the rebound," continued Miss Keppel.

"I hope he may," said Miss Lydia.

And somehow the religious life she was about to embrace did not seem so attractive as it had done a few minutes previously.

She longed to hear the details of Major Graham's affair, but pride forbade her to ask. She wondered who broke it off? Did he? If so, why? Was his heart reverting to her? If so, would it make any difference in her plans? But before she had decided this knotty point, Miss Keppel, who was apparently reading her thoughts, remarked:

"She broke it off. They say she never cared for him, and only accepted him out of pity."

Miss Lydia sighed a sigh of relief, and reflecting that no doubt it was all for the best she went up to her own room.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

"I shall never be friends with roses again;
I shall hate sweet music my whole life long."

AMY'S death created a nine days' wonder in Jersey, which subsided long before Jack Lockwood returned there after his leave was over, but during that nine days every kind of report was going about: murder, suicide, insanity, an accident, were all suggested; every one had a different version of the story, till all agreed it was a mystery which would never be solved.

Great curiosity was manifested in the island as to how the

widower would comfort himself. Would he be very much cut up? Would he marry again? If so, whom? Would he go out, or would he abstain from all gaieties?

This last question was soon answered, for Mr. Lockwood went nowhere, and shut himself up with his little girl most rigorously. When seen he looked a wreck; pale, thin, careworn and miserable; and his brother officers confessed he had become morose, and was so reserved that he repelled all expression of sympathy.

On Major Graham's return from Oxburgh after Easter, he relaxed somewhat to him, and their old intimacy, which for some time had ceased, appeared to be renewed. They visited each other constantly, and little Gladys went out daily with the little Grahams, and the two widowers took counsel together on the management of their children.

One day, rather more than six months after Jack returned to Jersey, the regiment was ordered to Egypt. A fortnight's notice was given them, and then the troop-ship would arrive to carry them away from the island, in which most of the officers and men had spent so many happy days.

Strange to say, Jack was not half so keen about going to Egypt as he had been about going to India in his wife's lifetime. There was Gladys; he could not take her with him. What was to be done with her? Was Graham going, or would he resign and remain in Jersey with his children, as he had talked of doing before? If the latter, there would be no difficulty about Gladys. She could go to him with Rose and he would feel sure she was well looked after.

But Mr. Lockwood soon found his friend intended to go to Egypt. He was restless and unsettled, and the order was most welcome to him. Moreover, he had a plan in view for providing for his two little girls. He intended to ask Miss Keppel to take charge of them, and, as she was now all alone, he believed he would have no difficulty in persuading her to take charge of the children.

This was an excellent arrangement, but it did not help Jack in providing for Gladys, and he was debating whether or not to take her with him, when a letter arrived from the squire, begging him to bring her to Oxburgh and leave her with them.

This was really what Jack in his heart of hearts desired, for Gladys was devoted to Joy, and he was sure the child would be

happier there than anywhere else ; the only drawback was, he did not wish to go to Oxburgh—at least so he told himself and Major Graham.

“Can’t you send the child with Rose, then ?” said Major Graham, who concluded Jack was averse to going to the scene of his wife’s death.

“Hardly. Mr. Oxburgh would think it very odd ; besides, I should like to see the last of Gladys, and I wish to see my boy again.”

He did not add there was another person he hungered to see far more than his boy, a person he told himself he wished to avoid, a person whom he felt he wronged his late wife in thinking of, a person whom if he must see it behoved him to be as cold as ice to, a person who was seldom out of his thoughts, a person whom he loved to distraction and for that very reason must avoid, out of respect to the memory of that wife who had loved him so unwisely.

He told himself he hated Oxburgh, and dreaded going there, and yet, as he started, his heart felt gay as a schoolboy’s who is returning for the holidays. He told himself he dreaded meeting Joy, and yet he counted the hours as he drew near to England, till his hungry eyes should feast once more on that sweet young face.

He told himself he must be cold as a stone to her ; that she was nothing to him, that she could never be more than his cousin by marriage ; and yet he knew she was all the world to him, that it would be torture to him to be cold to her, that all the while he would be longing to seize her and tell her how he loved her ; that he craved to hear her say she loved him, as he knew she did.

He had never doubted her love, and when he heard from Graham Joy was changed and sad, and had asked to be released from her engagement, he knew it was for his sake she had done so. And he was rejoiced that she was free, for, though he could never marry her himself, he could not bear the thought of her marrying any other man. He wished her to remain single for his sake ; he would like to think she was sighing out her life in vain for him as he for her.

It was sublimely selfish, but it was sweet, and it was man-like.

How would he find Joy looking this time ? He pictured her as he had left her, and as Major Graham had described her—pale,

sad, shy, sympathetic, longing yet not daring to express her sympathy.

Poor Joy ! How sad it was that she must suffer for the sins of others. She had suffered in Amy's life-time through her treachery ; she must suffer now Amy was dead for his sins against his wife, which led to her end.

It was hard on Joy.

She felt his coldness ; he knew that. She would feel it still more now, for probably she ascribed it partly to the fact she was engaged to Major Graham when he last saw her, partly to the shock of Amy's death ; but now she would put it down to his having ceased to love her.

Should he leave her under that delusion, or should he tell her he loved her more than ever, but could never marry ?

Should they vow to live unmarried for each other's sake ?

Would that make her happier ?

He could not decide till he saw her ; he must be guided by her manner and by circumstances, of course not by his own feelings and inclinations.

On arriving at Oxburgh a surprise, and not a pleasant one, awaited him.

Joy was away from home.

She had gone to stay with some friends and was not expected back for ten days.

Mr. Lockwood was furious.

What did she mean by going away from home when he was expected ?

Why did she give him to understand she would take care of Gladys and then go away before the child arrived ?

Did she suppose he should leave the child there without seeing how she settled ?

Was there ever such an ill-timed visit ?

Where was she staying ?

What was she doing ?

What did she mean by such conduct ?

Thus he inwardly raged and fumed all that night ; he was as sulky and cross as could be all the evening, to the squire's great amusement, for he shrewdly guessed the reason.

The next morning Jack announced Joy must be sent for ; either she must come back at once and take charge of Gladys, or

he should take the child to Egypt with him. He was very peremptory, and requested Mr. Oxburgh to write and say Joy must come home at once. After this letter was gone he recovered his temper to some extent, but only to lose it again when Joy's answer came two days later.

Joy was very sorry, but she could not possibly come home till the end of the week—she had a tennis party every day—but she would come on Saturday, and was quite sure Gladys would not have forgotten her, and would settle down perfectly by the Monday, and Joy understood the child's father did not leave till the middle of the week.

Jack was angrier than ever ; he went out after breakfast, and they saw no more of him till dinner-time, when he came in very tired, but resigned to await Joy's tardy arrival.

He could not understand her at all, wasting her time at tennis parties when she might have been spending these four or five precious days in his society, cultivating Gladys' affection. It was most unkind and selfish of her ; he should not have thought she could be so frivolous, and he should tell her so when she did come.

Or was it possible she dared not trust herself to meet him ? Was she so deeply in love with him that, believing he had ceased to care for her, she wished to avoid him ? Or was she coy, and ashamed to see him since she had broken off her engagement ?

These last suppositions were more flattering to his masculine vanity, so he adopted them, and kicked his heels about aimlessly during the hours that elapsed till Joy was expected.

He did not choose to be at home when she arrived, but he came in from the grounds, where he had been hiding, about half-an-hour later, and found Joy—not pale and sad, as he had expected, but fresh and gay, and blooming, and in excellent spirits.

How sweet she looked in her cream-coloured dress, with some roses Perriam had given her at her throat ; her great eyes radiant with joy, her colour coming and going, and giving some of that variety which was the great charm of her style of beauty, her pretty auburn hair rather disordered by travelling ; her sweet mouth smiling and showing her pretty teeth, which were one of her strong points.

“ I am so glad you are going to Egypt,” she exclaimed, when The Captain, who had been absorbing most of her attention since her arrival, had somewhat subsided.

How Jack hated that dog, privileged as it was to be Joy's most constant companion.

"Thank you. It is not usual for one's friends to rejoice when one is ordered abroad. However, there is a charm in all novelty," he answered huffily.

"I suppose not ; but under the circumstances I am delighted," continued Joy.

They were taking tea in Mrs. Oxburgh's room when this conversation took place.

"What circumstances?" said Lockwood stiffly.

"Why, leaving Gladys with us. I am charmed at the arrangement ; for though I am very fond of Lance, he is not the same as Gladys," said Joy.

"I wonder you did not come home directly you heard she was here!" gloomily remarked Jack.

"So I did, as soon as I could tear myself away from the gaieties, didn't I, mother dear?" and Joy sank down by her mother's side and began to tell her all about her visit.

Mr. Lockwood sat listening and watching her, secretly wondering at the change which had come over her. Had she ceased to care for him? Was she acting a part, or did she really feel as indifferent to him as she appeared to do? He could not tell.

"Where is Gladys? I am longing to see her," said Joy at last.

"She is with Rose and Lance in the park. Will you come and see her, or are you too tired?" said Jack.

"Yes, I will come. I am not in the least tired," said Joy, as they went through the hall, where she put on a great straw hat, which looked like a halo round her sweet fair face.

"Why didn't you come back sooner?" said Jack moodily, as he walked by her side.

"There was no reason for coming," said Joy.

"There was an excellent reason: I wanted you," said Jack.

"So did the people with whom I was staying," said Joy mischievously.

"Was their claim greater than mine?" said he in a satirical tone.

"Much. They are nearer relations ; you are only a cousin by marriage. They are my first cousins."

"Relationship has nothing to do with it ; relations are often less than mere acquaintances," said Lockwood.

"I don't agree with you. Blood is thicker than water," said Joy.

How dare she talk in this style ? thought Jack, turning pale with half-suppressed passion, as he seized Joy's arm and drew her towards him, when a child's cry of delight reached their ears.

"Here se is ; here is Joy—auntie. Let me go, Rose," cried Gladys, who, espying Joy in the distance, ran across the lawn towards them.

For once in his life Jack thought the child in the way, but afterwards, when he reflected on the matter, he came to the conclusion the interruption was well-timed.

What would he have said to her but for Gladys ? What could he say ?

What right had he to exact more from her ? Was not she doing far more for him now than he had any right to expect ?

Was there any one else in the world who would take care of his children as she was doing ?

He knew he was wrong, and perhaps for this very reason he was crosser than ever all the next day. He was cross with himself for having been so bearish to her ; and how sweet-tempered she was to him notwithstanding.

How bright and happy Joy seemed, like a sunbeam in the house. No wonder the children were so fond of her : and how she romped and played with them. Jack was jealous of his own children ; they monopolized so much of her time. Surely she might spare time to entertain him, seeing that his visit was so soon to come to an end. She would have the children when he was gone.

But Joy seemed quite unconscious that she was neglecting him ; in fact, she took care after that first day never to be alone with him again, and this annoyed him. He wanted to be alone with her ; he wanted to tell her he loved her in spite of the barrier which separated them : he wanted to know if she still cared for him ; he could not go to Egypt unless he knew that.

Oh ! the cruel fate which separated them. Here at Oxburgh, seeing her daily, living in the same house, breathing the same air, he seemed further off her than ever ; for the place to him was haunted by the ghost of Amy. Her death was still so fresh in

his memory, his remorse was still so keen that the idea of marrying again was one he ruthlessly dismissed as impossible whenever it occurred.

But to love each other, that was not forbidden by any law of God or man ; and yet Joy appeared to have ceased to love him. He must know if this were so ; he must see her alone before he sailed ; he must know the truth.

Had he a rival ?

For whom had she dismissed Major Graham ? For him or for some one else ?

Surely he had the right to know this. He would know it. He would ask her ; he would tell her he wanted to speak to her, and have it out before he left.

So on the eve of his departure he asked Joy to come for a walk in the park with him, ostensibly to receive some parting instructions about Gladys, and Joy fell into the trap and went.

"How long will you stay in Egypt?" said Joy.

"It is a five years' station. I shall be gone five years, unless anything unforeseen should call me back sooner."

"Five years ; it is a long time. Gladys will be getting quite a big girl by then. How she will miss you, poor little mite," said Joy.

"Children soon forget. I wonder if any one else will miss me besides Gladys," said Lockwood, turning his pale face to his companion, who was pulling a flower to pieces and scattering the petals in their path, her great eyes cast down to the ground.

He watched her narrowly, and his quick eyes detected a quiver in her lip and a passing blush flit like a rosy cloud over her face.

"Lance will a little, but he is too young to remember long," said Joy.

"Lance is a baby ; I was not thinking of him. Will you miss me, Joy?"

It was the first time he had called her by her Christian name since Amy's death, and it made Joy tremble.

"I don't know," she said.

"But I want to know. Tell me, Joy, will you miss me a little?"

"We shall all miss you," said Joy gently.

But this was not what he wanted ; such generalities would not satisfy the craving at his heart. He wanted to be assured that

Joy would miss him, and he was by no means sure that she would ; he could not read her feelings, and he could not go away in this uncertainty ; he must know if she still cared for him. She puzzled him, and he thought angrily she made it so much harder for him, for now that he suspected he had a rival he loved her more than ever.

"Joy, may I ask you something ?" he said.

"I don't know ; what is it ?" said Joy.

"Is it all quite over with you and Graham ?"

"Yes, quite ; I shall never marry," said Joy.

"Nor I again. But, Joy, I shall never cease to love ——"

"Hush, I did not come out here to talk nonsense ; I came to talk about Gladys. What am I to do if she is ever dangerously ill ?"

"Telegraph for me and I will come. You will write to me every mail, won't you ?"

"I won't promise that ; some one shall. But I hate writing letters ; you shall hear from some of us every week."

How cool she was ; he might be nothing to her, she spoke so unconcernedly, and she was all the world to him ; what would he not give to hold her once in his arms before he left ?

But just then they were passing near the spot where Amy had been found, and the memory of her rose up between them and prevented him.

They could never be more than they were to each other ; why make it harder for both to part ?

And so he checked the impulse, and the next day he left without another word of love being spoke between them.

He knew she would never marry, and that was some consolation ; but whether she would remain single for his sake, he was not so sure ; her conduct had baffled him ; she was a mystery he could not solve, and life was dull and flat.

However, he had only himself to thank ; he had built his house on the sand and great had been the fall thereof.

CHAPTER XL.

MISS LYDIA RUNS AWAY.

MISS LYDIA was supremely happy during the first week she spent in the Protestant convent dedicated to St. Stanislaus Kostka, a Jesuit saint, whose statue adorned the refectory, in

which the sisters, with Miss Lydia at the tail of them, took their meals.

Her duties were very light ; she had to do her own room and dust the guest-room, to work at some church embroidery, and to attend all the services in the chapel ; the rest of her time could be occupied as she pleased.

The second week she was less enthusiastic ; the meals tried her ; she was required to eat all that was set before her, and she was a dainty little creature and had great difficulty in forcing some of the food down.

The dress was also a trial : during her chrysalis period she had to wear an ugly white cap tied under her chin, and a still uglier little black cape on her shoulders ; but she bore this with more equanimity than the food, because one day she would be clothed in the wing-like veil of a novice and the black cape would be discarded, so the dress was only a temporary affliction.

The third week the life began to pall ; even the delightful services in the chapel after a time grew monotonous, notwithstanding the piquancy attaching to them from the fact that they were altogether at variance with the spirit and tone of the Church of England, and the ritual employed forbidden by her laws.

Sweet as forbidden fruit proverbially is, Miss Lydia grew tired of it ; moreover she had seen the real thing so often in the Catholic church, that this imitation had not even the charm of novelty for her. It was only naughty ; it was not even nice.

Then Miss Lydia's age was a trial to her ; the novices were all much younger than she was, though none of them were under twenty-five ; the superioress was about the same age as Miss Lydia, the novice-mistress much younger, and she found it by no means easy to have to obey scrupulously women younger and less experienced than herself.

But when Miss Lydia had been a month in the establishment, matters reached a climax, and she arrived at the conclusion that the religious life as practised in the Protestant convent of St. Stanislaus Kostka was not the bed of roses she had anticipated, and she began to think she must escape from it.

One of the rites of this would-be nunnery was that the beds must all be made in a particular way ; there was a certain angle at which the top sheet must be turned down over the counterpane, and if this rule was not strictly observed, the bed was

liable to be unmade, and the occupant had the trouble of re-making it.

Now Miss Lydia was not an adept in the art of bedmaking, and the method adopted by St. Stanislaus Kostka's votaries was not one that commended itself to her; her own method struck her as a far better one, so Miss Lydia turned her bed down as the housemaid at Saumarez Cottage was wont to do.

This was not discovered for a week, and then she was shown the mistake and requested to adopt the fashion of bedmaking patronized by St. Stanislaus. For two or three days Miss Lydia complied; then she lapsed again into the Saumarez fashion of bedmaking, and to her disgust found her bed all unmade a few nights later when she went to her room for the night.

This roused the good lady's temper; she had not very much, but when it was roused she was as obstinate as a mule, and the next day she wilfully made her bed in the Saumarez fashion, and at night found it unmade and the clothes on the floor. The next day and the next the same thing occurred; the bed was made by Miss Lydia in her way in the morning and unmade by the novice-mistress in the evening. This little game was played for a week, Miss Lydia enjoying her own naughtiness, though disliking the task of making her bed twice a day.

At the end of the week the "reverend mother" was informed of what was going on, and Miss Lydia was sent for to that lady's private room just before "compline." She went in inwardly trembling and made the required courtesy to the superioress, who remained seated, but did not offer her visitor a chair.

"Miss Keppel, I understand from Sister Mary Stanislaus you are unable to make your bed properly. I am surprised that, at your age, you are incapable of doing so simple a thing as making a bed."

"I beg your pardon, but I can and do make my bed every day, reverend mother, and every day Sister Mary Stanislaus unmakes it."

"Because it is not properly made. To-morrow morning you will make it in my presence, and as a penance you will then unmake and make every bed in the house. You may go now," said the "reverend mother" severely, and Miss Lydia courtesied and retired, muttering to herself in a determined little voice:

"I intend to go."

Now there was nothing to prevent this good lady from leaving the sisterhood that evening ; she had but to tell the superioress she wished to go, and though she might have advised her to remain till the next day, she could not have insisted upon it, as Miss Lydia was, as yet, under no vows. But this was far too commonplace a method of leaving to suit so romantic a body ; she wished to do the thing in as exciting a way as possible ; she wished the finale to her religious life to be striking ; she wished to go out with a flare ; she wished to pose as an escaped nun ; she wished, in short, to run away, and she determined to do so.

It was next door to an elopement ; in fact Miss Lydia thought it might very well be called an elopement ; there was only one thing wanting, namely, the bridegroom ; true, a bridegroom is an important factor in an elopement, but failing a bridegroom, it was in Miss Lydia's opinion better to elope without one than not to elope at all.

"Everything comes to him who knows how to wait," says the proverb, and all her life Miss Lydia had been waiting for some such exciting event to come to her ; now, at last, the opportunity had come and she meant to seize it.

Miss Dorcas had eloped ; Miss Lydia would run away ; that was certainly next door to eloping, if not precisely the same thing, and so instead of going into the chapel to "compline," she went to her own room to make her plans and, if feasible, put them into execution. She had no time to lose, for every one in the house went to "compline," after which the doors would all be locked and the keys carried up to the portress's cell.

It was, therefore, a case of now or never, for the sisters would be out of the chapel again in less than a quarter of an hour, and then there would be no possibility of escape that night, and if she waited till the next day, the chances were she would be ignominiously dismissed.

For Miss Lydia was fully determined no power on earth should induce her to make her bed in any fashion but her own ; and she was aware an open rebellion on her part would inevitably end in dismissal.

So the little lady tripped upstairs to her room, put all the money she had with her into her purse, packed a few things for the night in a little handbag ; took off for ever the little cape

and the hideous cap, threw them on the floor in a little outburst of temper, and then donned a travelling cloak and a bonnet and emerged from her room on to the corridor.

Here she could hear the singing in the chapel, and she paused to listen to discover how far the sisters had got in the service.

It was a Thursday night, and it was the custom on Thursday to conclude "compline" with singing the Latin hymn, "Tantum Ergo," used at benediction in the Catholic Church.

This was one of the things done at St. Stanislaus Kostka's Home which struck Miss Lydia as meaningless; and not even the fact that it was so very Catholic to sing a Latin hymn reconciled her to the other fact that it was a sham to sing that particular one before an empty altar.

"They are singing 'Tantum Ergo;' they will be out directly. I must fly or I shall be caught," said Lydia to herself, as with beating heart and flushed cheeks she tripped lightly down the stone stairs into the lower corridor, at one end of which was a door into the chapel, at the other the entrance hall and the hall door.

She ran rapidly down the corridor, for the music had ceased while she was on the stairs, a few seconds more and it would be too late; the chapel door opened as she reached the entrance hall. Her heart thumped violently, her fingers trembled as she fumbled with the lock, she could hear the steps of the sisters approaching nearer and nearer as they filed down the corridor; another second or two and the portress would be in the entrance hall.

Oh! this stupid lock, would it never open?

Yes, at last, the handle turned, the door opened, the night air cooled her flushed cheeks, liberty was before her; she stepped out, closed the door without latching it behind her, and ran down the street and round the first corner as fast as her feet could carry her, wondering as she ran if the passers-by would guess she was an escaped nun, for so she chose to call herself.

She was not missed that night, though the unlatched door caused the portress a great deal of perturbation and anxiety, for if she had left it open herself she would very likely be deprived of her office for her carelessness. But the next morning, just as the "reverend mother" was about to proceed to her room to witness the bedmaking operation, prepared to remain there and

unmake the bed as often as it pleased Miss Lydia to make it wrongly, bent on having it made à la St. Stanislaus, she received a visit from the novice-mistress.

This lady came to inform the superioress of Miss Lydia's disappearance ; her bed was unmade and evidently had not been slept in, and this, coupled with the confession of the portress that the street door was found open after "compline," pointed to the conclusion the runaway must have left the previous evening.

"It must be hushed up ; it will never do to let the novices hear of it. We must say she was summoned home suddenly. I only hope she has got home safely, but she is not at all the kind of person to be alone in London at nine or ten o'clock at night. We must communicate with her sister at once. She would never have done for us, she is too old to be moulded, but her income was a great temptation," said the "reverend mother."

It was true that Miss Lydia was quite out of her element when, ten minutes after leaving St. Stanislaus Kostka's Home, she found herself in a crowded London thoroughfare, without the slightest notion where she was or where she meant to go.

The lights dazzled her, the horse traffic frightened her, the noise deafened her, the foot passengers jostled her ; she felt unable to collect her thoughts ; breathless from running, her first idea was to get a cab, but she did not know how to proceed to secure this coveted object. There were plenty passing, but the drivers paid no attention to her feeble efforts to attract them ; at last some kind-hearted man took compassion on her and hailed a four-wheeler, into which the little lady jumped with alacrity.

She was safe here from the jostling crowd, and she could not be run over ; she had secured herself from that danger ; but a new difficulty arose : the cabman desired to know where she wished to be driven to, and Miss Lydia, not knowing herself, could not tell him.

"Where to, ma'am ?" said the cabman, poking his head in at the window as he fastened the door of the cab.

"I don't know," panted Miss Lydia.

"Blessed if I do, then," said the cabman.

"Drive, drive slowly, please ; I am very nervous," said Miss Lydia.

"All right ma'am ; my horse is as quiet as a lamb. Where shall I drive to ?"

"I really don't know ; I—I am so overcome. Drive on, please, or we shall have a crowd collect," gasped the trembling runaway.

"Where did you come from, ma'am ? Shall I take you back ?" suggested the cabman.

"No, no, no ; I—I don't know where I came from. Where am I ?" cried Miss Lydia, in a fever of fear at the mere idea of being taken back to St. Stanislaus Kostka's Home.

"Well, this is a rum customer. Don't know where she is going to, where she came from, or where she is. Guess I had better drive her to Bedlam," muttered the cabman.

"Do you live near here, ma'am ?" he inquired.

"No. I live in Jersey."

"I can't drive you home, then ; my horse don't swim. Shall I take you to a nice quiet hotel ?" suggested the cabman.

"No, I never went to an hotel alone in my life," exclaimed Miss Lydia, thinking of stories of beds which descended through trap-doors ; of murderous landlords, of gentlemen addicted to mistaking a maiden lady's bedroom for their own, like Mr. Pickwick.

"Well, ma'am, I shall have to move on directly ; here is a policeman coming up. If you can't think of any place to go to, you had better get out, unless you wish to go for a drive," said the cabman.

The mention of a policeman stimulated Miss Lydia's brain to evolve a suggestion of some one whom she knew by name, who might take compassion on her ; she had not the remotest idea in what part of London that some one lived, but in the simplicity of her heart she trusted that the cabman might be better informed.

"Do you know a gentleman named Selsey ?"

"Can't say that I do, ma'am," said the cabman aloud.

"Guess this here little lady was born yesterday, and born silly," he muttered inwardly.

"He is a clergyman ; his church is somewhere in the East End of London, and he has lecture halls and homes for distressed people."

"To be sure, I know that Mr. Selsey ; at least I know where to find him ; it is four miles from here. I'll take you there, ma'am, right enough," said the cabby, rejoiced at this solution of the difficulty.

He knew Mr. Selsey by name very well ; he knew his church, and once in the neighbourhood he had no difficulty in finding his house, whither, soon after ten o'clock, he landed Miss Lydia, who to her intense relief, was told on inquiring that both Mr. and Mrs. Selsey were at home.

CHAPTER XLI.

MISS LYDIA SETTLES DOWN.

FELIX OXBURGH was dining with the Selseys the evening Miss Lydia eloped from the Home of St. Stanilaus Kostka, which event took place a few days after Major Graham and Jack Lockwood sailed for Egypt.

Mr. Selsey was sitting on a stool at his wife's feet when Felix was announced, and as he saw the expression of perfect happiness on Frances' face reflected in that of her husband gazing up at her, an involuntary sigh escaped him.

Was it one of regret for what he was renouncing? Perhaps, for self-renunciation is not a painless virtue ; there would be little virtue in it if it were ; the martyr feels the fierce pain of burning though he is willing to be bound to the stake, and Felix was by no means insensible to the fact that he was giving up earth's sweetest joys by entering the priesthood.

"Welcome always, Felix, doubly welcome to-night ; Frances has been scolding me roundly, telling me my temper is unbearable, that I ought to be ashamed of myself for giving way to it, et cetera. I assure you there is no one like the wife of one's bosom for telling one home truths," said Mr. Selsey, rising from his lowly seat.

"At any rate, I always tell you them in private," said Frances blushing and looking fondly at her husband.

"I know you do ; you are a model wife in public, that is the worst of it. Strangers would imagine you worshipped me, from the crown of my hat to the soles of my boots ; that you were the most obedient of wives, hanging on every word which dropped from my lips," said Mr. Selsey.

"And is she nothing of the kind?" asked Felix, in an amused tone.

"Oh, outwardly, yes. No one has the least idea of what I undergo in private, though ; but I don't mind telling you, Felix, she abuses me like a pickpocket sometimes ; her one saving grace

is she administers her curtain-lectures in the day time ; she does not keep me awake, as her prototype, Mrs. Caudle, was wont to do to the unfortunate Caudle."

"I'm sure it is very seldom I take you to task, Tom ; but I observe when I do, the effect is as salutary as a whipping is to the twins."

"I only wish you had twin husbands as well as twin sons. and then I could expiate my offences vicariously, as they do, They are never both punished at once, Felix ; they take it in turns, Frances' idea being the boy that is not punished suffers as much mentally as the boy that is whipped does physically, so she economizes her chastisements. Never mind, Frances ; they will soon be old enough for me to take them in hand," said Mr. Selsey with a wink at Felix.

"I am sure they won't. Don't talk such nonsense," said Frances rather warmly as dinner was announced.

Later on in the evening, when they had gone back to the drawing-room, the conversation turned on Jack Lockwood, who had paid the Selseys a short visit on his way back from Oxburgh to Plymouth.

"He is very much changed since Amy's death ; he looks years older. He feels it far more than I should have expected, for it certainly was not a happy marriage," said Frances.

"Perhaps there is a certain amount of remorse mixed with his grief ; it struck me there was," said Mr. Selsey.

"I am afraid he blames himself unjustly. He was an excellent husband. He is a fine character, is Lockwood, and a most unselfish man. I only hope he won't sacrifice his happiness and Joy's to a mistaken sense of duty ; but he is conscientious almost to a fault," said Felix.

"Poor fellow ; it was a disastrous affair from beginning to end, but the end was so terrible it makes one feel lenient to his wife," said Mr. Selsey.

"She was greatly to blame. Her vanity has wrecked two lives besides her own," said Frances, with the usual severity of her sex when passing judgment on another woman.

"She was greatly to be praised, too, in some ways, and to be pitied infinitely, Frances," said Felix rather sharply, while Mr. Selsey made a comic gesture at his wife to imply that her turn to be lectured had come.

"Praised for her beauty and attractiveness, do you mean?" said Frances.

"No ; I mean for her virtues. Few women have had greater temptation than Amy had. She was an acknowledged belle and very fascinating ; she had half-a-dozen men madly in love with her ; and yet even in Jersey, where scandal is rife, not one breath of slander ever tarnished her name. She was a most loyal wife, and pure as the driven snow she chose for her shroud," said Felix.

"Felix, you are a genius," interrupted Mr. Selsey.

"Why ? Because I am not blind to poor Amy's good points ?"

"No ; because I conceive the work of a genius to be to point out the divine element in his fellow-creatures ; and the proof of genius is the power a man manifests, first in discerning and then in showing to others the divine nature. You have that power. In a certain sense St. John the Baptist was to my mind the greatest genius the world has ever produced. He recognized God, and pointed Him out to His disciples when he saw Him walking by the sea-shore."

"I know nothing about his genius ; I only know he was the greatest prophet the world has ever seen," said Felix.

"Prophecy is a phase of genius ; both are sparks of the divine fire ; but I won't shock you, Felix, with my unorthodox views," said Mr. Selsey.

"Rather let us see if Felix's genius, as you define it, will enable him to point out the divine element in the nature of that foolish little woman Jack was telling us about the other day," said Mrs. Selsey.

"Oh, yes, Felix, by-the-way. So I hear you made a conquest in Jersey, and nearly made what you would call a convert into the bargain."

"What do you mean ?" asked Felix.

"Now, now, Felix, don't affect ignorance. Surely you know your own power ? You know a certain little lady was so desperately in love with you that she first nearly turned Catholic for your sake, and then, when she heard you were going to be a priest, she went into a Protestant nunnery ?"

"Don't, Selsey. I have no idea to whom you are referring."

"Why, to Miss Lydia Keppel, of course."

"Miss Lydia! Why, she is nearly as old as my mother; there can't be a word of truth in such nonsense."

"There is. Miss Keppel was so angry with her that she told Jack all about it. I believe Miss Lydia even went so far as to order her *trousseau*. Felix, you have been behaving very badly, I am afraid," said Frances.

"But the thing is impossible," objected Felix, in blank amazement.

"My dear fellow, nothing is impossible to the gentler sex; and I should say the number of women who would find it impossible to fall in love with you is limited, particularly if you encouraged them as you appear to have encouraged Miss Lydia," said Mr. Selsey, who delighted in thus teasing his brother-in-law.

"But, Tom, you can't think that I ever for one moment attempted to raise such ridiculous hopes? It is too absurd."

"Women are very absurd sometimes."

"So are men. But now, Felix, point out the divine in Miss Lydia, please. Tom is only chaffing you; we know you never gave her the slightest cause for such supreme folly. Now prove your genius as defined by Tom," said Mrs. Selsey.

"Tell you Miss Lydia's good points? Well, as far as I know I should say her nature was gentle, submissive, easily led, obedient, and from such material a saint might be made," said Felix.

"If you please, sir, Miss Lydia Keppel wishes to speak to you. She has driven up in a cab," interrupted a servant.

"Talk of the angels! Miss Lydia Keppel! I'll come immediately. I say, Felix, she means business. Hadn't you better hide?" said Mr. Selsey in an aside to Felix, as he followed the servant into the hall.

"What can she be doing here at this time of night? I thought you said she was in a Protestant convent, Frances?" said Felix.

"So she was. My belief is she has run away. Wait till I come back; my curiosity is so intensely excited, I must go and see," said Frances, leaving Felix to go and see what brought Miss Lydia to her house that evening.

She put her head into the room a few minutes later to say:

"She has run away from the convent. I was right. How about her obedience now, Felix?"

"I will wait till I know some details," said Felix.

A few minutes later Mr. Selsey led Miss Lydia into the drawing-room, and her fluttering manner when she saw Felix testified that there was some truth in Jack's story.

"Why, Miss Lydia, this is a surprise. I had just heard you had gone to be a Protestant nun, which sounds like a contradiction in terms," said Felix cordially.

"So I was ; but I have been very wicked, I am afraid. I have run away," said Miss Lydia.

"My dear lady, if you ask my opinion, it is about the most sensible thing you could have done. If you wish to be a nun, you must first of all leave the Church of England for the Church of Rome," said Mr. Selsey.

"I almost think you are right. You see, Mr. Oxburgh, I am like King Agrippa—I am almost persuaded," said Miss Lydia.

"Let us hope 'almost' may soon become quite," said Felix gravely.

"What made you run away ?" said Frances ; and Miss Lydia told the story of the bedmaking, at which Mr. Selsey made merry.

"Felix, I am afraid your character of a genius is trembling in the balance. How about the obedience and submission you spoke of ?" said Frances in an undertone to her brother.

"Wait a moment. Miss Lydia, would you mind telling us what induced you to go there ?" asked Felix.

"My director urged it. He thought I had a vocation, and so I obeyed him," said Miss Lydia.

"There, Frances ; you see I was right, after all," said Felix.

"My dear Miss Lydia, would not you like to go to your room ?" she said aloud.

Miss Lydia assented, and she went upstairs, wondering what strange fate had brought her and Felix together again. Fortunately for her, Felix was in deacon's orders now and in clerical dress, so there was no room for any more hope of catching him. So abandoning this hope, Miss Lydia resolved to constitute him her spiritual adviser, and during the week she spent with the Selseys she discussed all her religious difficulties with him.

Felix, however, would not hear of her being received into the Church at present, but insisted on her waiting at least six months before she made up her mind. So she went back to Jersey armed with a small library of Catholic works, resolved never to

enter a Protestant church again after her experience of St. Stanislaus Kostka's Home.

Miss Keppel was inclined to be rather hard on her sister at first, and made some very satirical remarks ; but Miss Lydia was very gentle, and expressed such genuine regret for her foolish conduct, that the elder sister was mollified and peace was restored.

Major Graham's little girls were installed at Saumarez when Miss Lydia returned, and the children's voices brightened the lives of the two ladies and made their charming home more home-like than ever.

Miss Lydia had now only one fear, namely, that the domestic peace would be once more disturbed when she announced the fact that she meant to be a Catholic ; but, to her great relief, Miss Keppel one day took up a controversial book she was reading and said :

"Lydia, my advice to you is, go over to Rome. You will never be satisfied until you are there. It will suit you exactly. You require leading : you will be led. Obedience is necessary for your happiness. You will have to obey the priest. You have no private judgment : there you need none. The Church decides what you are to believe. All you have to do is to believe it—if you can. You can ; I can't. If I could I should follow your example, for I have the greatest respect for an honest *bona fide* Catholic. Take my advice and become one."

"I mean to, when I am considered prepared, Sophy. I was afraid you would be angry. But I really have sown my wild oats now, and I mean to settle down in real earnest," said Miss Lydia humbly.

And having "eloped" once, let us hope she will keep her resolution.

CHAPTER XLII.

JACK RETURNS.

"Welcome each rebuff
That turns earth's smoothness rough."

JOY was not really so insusceptible to Jack's influence as he had imagined. It was as hard for her to part as for him—harder, perhaps, since she was remaining at home, while he had the advantage of fresh scenes and fresh interests to divert his thoughts from her.

She had not ceased to care for him, as he half thought, nor had he any rival in her heart. The change in her manner to him was not difficult to explain. She had been miserable while engaged to Major Graham, because on Amy's death she woke to the fact that she still loved Jack with all the ardour of first love. She had been miserable also because of Jack's coldness to her during his first visit to Oxburgh after his wife's death.

But when she broke off her engagement with Major Graham, her heart grew light again, and second thoughts told her that under the circumstances Jack could not well be anything but distant to her just then. He could not be making love to her directly after his wife's death ; it would not be decent.

So hope revived in Joy's heart, and she trusted that some day—a long way off, perhaps—her heart's desire would be granted her. Then when she heard Jack was going to Egypt, but was coming to Oxburgh first, a great fit of shyness seized her. She began to think she had been forward. Jack would suspect she had dismissed Major Graham for his sake. It behoved her to be very distant in order to dispel this idea. Accordingly, she chose to be absent from home when he arrived, and did not choose to hurry home at his bidding ; and when she did come home, took care not to be left alone with him.

Joy was not the least bit of a flirt, but she was a coquette. She would never lead a man on whom she did not care for, but she would pretend to run away from the advances of the man she loved. To some extent this was natural to her. She was like many other women—she could not help it, even if it ruined her own happiness, as coquetry has wrecked the lives of many women ; for men are very vain, and few can stand being snubbed.

And so she had coquetted with Jack and sent him away doubting her love ; and, of course, no sooner was the door closed on him than she would have given the whole world to call him back. Like many another coquette she was reaping the fruits of her folly. There is this difference, among others, between a coquette and a flirt : a flirt endangers the happiness of others ; a coquette endangers her own happiness.

To return to Joy. Then came a reaction, and, from being the sunbeam of the house, for weeks she was in the depths. The children worried her. She took no interest in anything. Perriam's flowers seemed to flaunt her ; she hated the sight of them.

All her home duties were distasteful ; she did not care what there was for dinner so long as the cook suggested something, and did not leave it to her to think of. She had no appetite. She could not sleep ; when she did, it was only to dream of Jack and wake up to find he was gone to Egypt for five long weary years.

Five years ! He had not been gone five weeks, and they seemed an eternity. How should she live for five years without the sight of his face, without the sound of his voice, without the touch of his hand ? Why, they would be five years of blindness, deafness, death, for he was all the whole world to her. So she told herself. Poor Joy ! It is hardly fair to look at her just now, poor struggling, rebellious child. There is nothing heroic in her conduct ; she is going through the furnace which hundreds of girls have passed through before, and hundreds more will pass through in the future ; and her conduct is no better than that of ninety-nine out of every hundred of those thousands.

At the end of six weeks Mr. Oxburgh had had enough of it—Felix was studying for the priesthood and could not come down to Oxburgh ; Joy refused to go away from home, so the squire sent for the Selseys to come and pay them a visit, to rouse Joy, as he expressed it.

For the first day or two Mr. Selsey watched Joy, while pretending not to do anything of the kind. He noticed her listlessness, her want of interest in everything, her heavy eyes, which told of want of sleep and of weeping, her want of appetite, her fancy for taking far too long a walk with The Captain one day, and refusal to stir out on the next, and then he made up his mind what to do.

“Joy, I have to go home to-day for a few days, and I want you to come with me,” he announced at breakfast a few days after he arrived.

Joy made several objections, but he parried them all. Frances would attend to Joy’s duties and look after the children ; the change would do her good. And finally, Mr. Selsey, while protesting he must go, vowed he would not go without her, so Joy reluctantly went.

He was very good to her ; he did not worry her to talk when she wished to be silent. He made her as comfortable as possible during the journey and on her arrival at his house ; but for the

next few days Joy failed to discover what business had brought him to London, for his time was entirely devoted to her.

Every evening he took her to a theatre; in the afternoon they went for a long drive; but the mornings were devoted to sight-seeing of a peculiar kind. The first morning they visited a prison and went all over it; the next day they went over a workhouse; the next morning was spent in going over a hospital for incurables, and then Joy began to wonder what her brother-in-law meant by showing her so much suffering.

The fourth day he told her to dress herself as plainly as possible, as he wanted to take her to some of the worst parts of London; and that morning Joy learnt more of the poverty and misery of the London poor than she had ever known of before. Mr. Selsey showed her such scenes of misery as she had before had no conception of, and when he told her there was far worse to be seen, Joy begged to be spared, and went home very thoughtful.

She was very silent during lunch, but afterwards, when the servant had left the room, she went over to the hearthrug, where Mr. Selsey was standing with his back to the fire, after the manner of Englishmen, and said abruptly:

"Tom, I have been an odious, selfish little toad. Why didn't you tell me so point-blank?"

"Because I thought it more polite to tell you indirectly. I was not sure how you would take it if I spoke more plainly. You see, Joy, unfortunately for you, I am only your brother-in-law, not your husband, so there is a certain amount of conventional civility I am bound to observe."

Mr. Selsey's tone was jocular, but Joy knew well enough he meant what he said, except his joke about being her husband; and she felt sure her suspicion that he had purposely taken her to these scenes of woe to show her how much others had to suffer, and how much she had to be thankful for, was correct.

"You have been very kind to me, Tom. Thank you," said Joy gently; and there was such a world of repentance in that one little word, "thank you," that Mr. Selsey felt sure his lesson had taken effect.

He turned round, and laying the pipe he was about to fill on the chimney-piece, took Joy's hands in his, and looking straight into her sweet eyes, said:

"Joy, I don't think there is any need for us to visit any more

scenes of woe. I should like to-morrow to show you my feeble efforts at alleviating some of it—they are only a drop in the ocean, it is true—and the next day we will go back to Oxburgh, unless you would like another week of theatres.”

“No. I am ready to go back to-day, if you like, or to-morrow.”

“No. I have taken tickets for to-night and to-morrow at the theatre. We will go back the day after to-morrow, and you will show them what a good doctor I am, won't you?” and he stooped and kissed Joy's fresh young face—after which she ran away to hide the tears that would come although unbidden.

Joy went home a very different being to the love-sick girl who had gone away a week before. She roused herself from her selfish sorrow, and threw herself heart and soul into the care of Jack's children ; and as, fortunately for her, there was plenty of work for her to do, what with an invalid mother to amuse, the children and the housekeeping to see after, she soon got back her sleep and appetite, and with them her spirits.

Work is a panacea for many ills ; and the “tired woman's heaven of doing nothing for ever and ever,” would be a hell to most people.

Of course Joy had her moments—days sometimes—of depression, when the longing for Jack's love was almost unbearable ; and Time's pace was so hard that it seemed the length of seven years. But she did her best to shake off melancholy, the sin for which Dante had so little mercy.

Every mail brought a letter from Jack Lockwood, sometimes to Joy, sometimes to her father or mother, and the Egyptian mail days were red-letter days in Joy's calendar.

Time went on, and the second winter after Amy's death and Jack's departure set in. Up to that Christmas Jack had never once missed writing, but when the first mail in the New Year came it brought no letter from him. It was Joy's turn for a letter, and she was sadly disappointed at not getting one ; but when the next week came and no letter arrived, even the squire was surprised and expressed his astonishment. But the third week, when the mail only brought Joy a letter from Major Graham, telling her of his approaching marriage with a lady he had met in Cairo, the astonishment increased to anxiety, particularly as there was no mention of Jack in Major Graham's letter.

The squire fidgeted about the house, in and out of his wife's room, all the morning, and talked about telegraphing to Cairo to know what was the matter, but Joy discouraged this idea, saying if anything had happened to Jack, Major Graham would have let them know.

"But why doesn't he write? To miss three mails, when he always writes every mail, is most extraordinary," fumed the squire.

"I don't know," said Joy, but in her heart she thought the next mail would bring the news of Captain Lockwood's marriage, for he got his company the last summer.

She had scarcely spoken, when the door was thrown open, and Captain Lockwood was announced. Joy turned red and white, and hot and cold, and nearly fell over the two children and The Captain, who were playing at her feet, as she rose to greet him.

"Gladys, here is father. Don't you remember him?" said Joy, seizing Gladys in her arms, and trying to rouse the child's delight to hide her own intense pleasure at the unexpected arrival.

Gladys, however, was shy, and shrunk away for a moment from her father, clinging to Joy. It was but for a moment, though; directly she heard his voice her memory returned, and with a cry of delight she sprang into his outstretched arms and covered his handsome bronzed face with her kisses.

"Father, darling, Gladys is so glad; Lance is glad; Joy—
auntie is glad. Do look at her," cried Gladys, when she could speak.

Joy, who was blushing the colour of a peony, stooped down to pick up Lance, and hid her face behind his golden curls, but not before Captain Lockwood had read his welcome in her eyes.

He was altered; he was bronzed, but besides that his formerly somewhat mobile features were hardened, and he looked as if he had seen sorrow; his smile was less frequent than in his bachelor days, but it was sweeter; his eyes, always expressive, had now a sad look in them, which gave an interest to his face, and struck a chord of sympathy in Joy's heart. He was improved in appearance, it was difficult to say how, but he was undoubtedly strikingly handsome now. Even Mr. Oxburgh thought so as he

watched him with Gladys on one of his knees and Lance on the other, listening to their pretty prattle and pressing them alternately to his breast.

Joy sat looking on, with the faithful Captain in her arms, laughing and pretending to be jealous, saying after all a dog was the only faithful friend, while The Captain, delighted to find himself so important, curled himself up on her lap and licked her hands gratefully.

In the midst of this scene the squire came in to pay one of his frequent visits to his wife, from whom he was seldom absent more than a few hours at a time.

"Here we are, Mary—three generations of us—past, present and future."

"What do you mean, John? I don't understand you," said pretty Mrs. Oxburgh.

"Why, the children are the future, Jack and Joy the present, and we the past."

"Passing, if you like, John, but we are not the past yet, though we have grandchildren," said Mrs. Oxburgh.

"Well, I am the past, and you are passing—passing fair, my love, as ever," whispered the squire.

"And you are as silly as ever, John."

"Because my love for you is exceeding great—passing the love of women. Is that silly?" said the squire.

"Perhaps. I wish the present generation were as silly as the passing one," said Mrs. Oxburgh in an undertone, with a glance at Joy and Jack.

"So do I. But perhaps they will be when they are as old as we are," said the squire.

"Frances and Tom, I think, are. Theirs is a perfectly happy marriage."

"Yes," assented the squire.

And so it was, for it was built on a rock, so none of the storms of life were strong enough to destroy it.

"I know another perfectly happy marriage," said Jack, who had overheard Mrs. Oxburgh's last remark.

"Do you? Whose?" said the squire.

"Some people I know in Egypt. You remember Miss Dorcas Keppel, sir—now Mrs. Dobson? She and her husband were at my station, and I saw a good deal of them; and a happier couple

it would be hard to find. She looks ten years younger than she did in Jersey, and he simply worships her."

"I am very glad to hear it. I always liked Dorcas Keppel; she is a very sensible woman. By the way, Jack, talking of Jersey, what has become of that young Jimpson who enlisted some years ago, the parson's son? Has he gone to the bad entirely?"

"Oh, dear, no, sir. He has just got his commission, and has exchanged into our sister regiment, to which we are linked. He is out there with the depôt, and Mrs. Dobson is his greatest friend; she is like a mother to him. He is doing very well, indeed, and will make a fine officer. He is sobered down very much, and looks much older than he is."

Jack did not add that he had been instrumental in getting Jack Jimpson his commission, but this was the case, for he knew the boy owed his misfortunes in a great measure to poor Amy, and he had felt it his duty to atone in some measure for her selfishness.

The news of Amy's terrible death had had a great effect on Jack Jimpson. He was a changed man from the day he heard it; before, he had been reckless, but from then he set to work to study hard for his examinations, and as he was popular with his officers and Jack had a good deal of influence, he succeeded in getting his commission.

He will, probably, be all the better soldier and man for having borne the yoke in his youth, and here we leave him.

CHAPTER XLIII.

AT LAST.

"Grow old along with me,
The best is yet to be;
The last of life for which the first was made."

THE demon of coquetry is one which requires a great deal of casting out; it will return again and again to its victim. It took possession of Joy in spite of all her efforts to keep it out directly Captain Lockwood returned. He had not been in the house twenty-four hours before Joy was leading him a fine dance. In the day-time the children were her body-guard; he could never catch her without one or other of them in her arms, and after they

were gone to bed Joy took refuge under the shadow of her mother's wing.

In vain for him to try and catch her alone ; he never succeeded. He laid traps for her, but she managed to elude them all. Then he got angry, and determined he would see her alone, whether she liked it or not. She could not control the blush of delight which overspread her clear complexion when he came near her ; she could not keep her little hand from trembling when he squeezed it night and morning ; she could not keep her heart from beating with pleasure when he entered the room she was in. But she could and did shrink from him, like a silly, shy school-girl, to his great annoyance and her secret delight, for she saw her conduct piqued him and made him desperate.

Joy knew she was behaving foolishly ; she knew he was a proud man, who would not stand snubbing ; but she was proud too, and she was determined he should not suspect how much she cared for him until she heard from him that he still loved her.

She was by no means sure whether she or Gladys was the magnet which brought him to England, and until she was certain of this she was determined not to let him see how much she enjoyed his presence. What a contrast she was to poor Amy, who always met her admirers half-way, whereas Joy fled from hers like a bird before a gale.

He had been a week at Oxburgh, when one evening there was a dinner party, and Joy had to remain in the drawing-room and entertain her guests instead of fleeing to her mother's room as she generally did after dinner. He tried in vain to get a few minutes' private conversation with her during the evening. At last all the guests left, and Joy, somewhat to his surprise and much to his delight, instead of going to bed, moved into the conservatory, which opened out of the drawing-room.

He followed her and shut the door behind them.

"At last I have caught you. Now, Joy, tell me what——" he began, seizing Joy by the waist.

"Is it freezing, Perriam ?" said Joy coolly, as she slipped away from him.

Perriam was at the other end of the conservatory, making up the fire for the night ; Joy had heard him come in or would not have ventured there herself.

Jack turned on his heel and, muttering something to himself, went off in a rage to the smoking-room to soothe his wounded feelings with a pipe.

The next morning, to the delight of the children, it was snowing fast when they got up ; the great beautiful flakes fell silently down, carpeting the ground with a soft white carpet, and changing the whole aspect of the outer world as snow only can change it. It wrought other changes besides these external ones ; it awoke delight in the children and ecstasy in The Captain, who revelled in it ; it apparently recalled Amy's sad death to her husband, for he was very grave and silent ; it seemed to depress the squire, and it dispelled Joy's coquetry as the wind dispels a fog.

She was graver than usual, for the snow could not fail to bring back to her memory also that snow-storm two years ago, when she and Amy and Mr. Selsey had snowballed each other, she and he at least all unconscious of the tragedy that night was to bring forth. But there was no coquetry about her, her manner to Jack was full of sympathy, for she felt he was thinking of his dead wife and the sad circumstances of her death.

After breakfast the squire went to his own room ; Jack moved to the window and, with his hands in his pockets, stood sadly and silently watching the snow as it fell ; while Joy, instead of rushing up to the nursery, as she generally did after breakfast, sat over the fire pretending to read a newspaper.

Now was Jack's time ; he was alone with Joy, and the devil of coquetry had been exorcized by the snow for a time. Would he avail himself of the opportunity, one which might not return again ?

It seemed not, for as the hands of the clock on the chimney-piece moved slowly on silence reigned in the room, and he stood motionless, watching the snow. In another twenty minutes the servants would come in to clear away the breakfast things ; it was past ten now, and punctually at half-past they would come.

Suddenly the silence was broken by a loud impatient bark ; it was The Captain, begging Jack to let him in at the window for his morning bowl of tea, which his delight at the snow had almost made him forget. Jack made no attempt to open the window, and The Captain's barks waxed furious, till at last his mistress remembered he had not had his tea.

"Why, my dear Captain, what is your mistress thinking of?

Come in, my own doggie, come in," said Joy, rushing to the window to open it.

"I beg your pardon ; I was not attending to the dog," said Jack, reaching forward to help her.

His hand grasped hers as she turned the handle which opened the French window, and their eyes met as the dog bounded into the room and rushed to his tea, which was on the floor awaiting him.

Jack kept the hand he held, and closing the window with his disengaged one, said :

"At last. I won't let you go now till you have heard what I have to say."

Joy evinced no particular desire to go just then. She stood trembling before him, the red blood flitting like rosy clouds over her cheeks, her eyes downcast, the great transparent blue-veined lids veiling them, her right hand in his, his left stealing unforbidden round her waist, the morning sun lighting up her red-brown hair till it looked like burnished gold.

Jack, however, was too intent in gazing at the fair face to notice the hair ; he wanted to read his answer in those downcast eyes.

"Joy, do you know what brought me home ?" he whispered.

"Gladys, I suppose," said Joy, the demon of coquetry trying to find an entrance again.

"No ; it was some one dearer to me than Gladys, precious as she is. Guess again."

He was standing very close to her now.

"Lance, then," said Joy, with a shy look up at him.

"Joy, you know better ; you know it was you, my own, my first, my last, my only love ; it was you who brought me back to England. I came to see you ; to tell you once more how I love you ; to ask you to be my wife. Don't send me away, Joy ; don't say you no longer love me."

"I don't," said Joy coyly.

"You don't ! My God ! I feared you didn't," cried Lockwood, turning pale, and, taking her face in his hands, he held it up to gaze into her eyes and see if she spoke the truth.

"I mean I don't say so," explained Joy.

"Don't say what ?"

"What you told me not to say," said Joy, taking hold of his wrists with her little hands to remove his hands from her face.

"Joy, Joy, what do you mean?" he cried, hope reviving in his heart, as he bent closer down to the face he still held in his hands.

And then somehow Joy's arms slipped round his neck, her lips met his, and there was no need for a verbal explanation of her meaning.

Joy was the first to speak coherently after the pause which ensued in the conversation.

"At last, Jack! Oh! what a time we have had to wait; it seems a lifetime since your horse ran away with us."

"Have you loved me all that time, Joy?"

"I hope not; I tried not to, until two years ago, and then——" Joy paused.

"What then?"

"Then I did not try any longer; it was very foolish, perhaps, but it was no longer wrong."

"Joy, you are an angel, and I am not fit to buckle your shoes."

"Never mind, they don't buckle," said Joy.

"Joy, listen. I never tried to forget you till I read poor Amy's letter, written the night of her death; then I was filled with remorse, for then I learnt she loved me. Perhaps, had I suspected it, I might have done my best to crush out my love for you; I don't know. At any rate, I *did try* to do so after her death, to make reparation for the past, but it was no use: the more I tried to suppress it the more it grew; my love was like the wild camomile, which the more you tread on the faster it grows; until at last I saw the folly of undoing one wrong by committing another, and it seemed to me the best way to atone for having been a bad husband to Amy, was to be a good one to you."

Just as Captain Lockwood finished this speech, the door opened and two servants entered the room to clear away the breakfast, and before Joy had told her mother of her happiness, her engagement was known in the servants' hall; although both she and Jack had flattered themselves the sudden propriety of their attitudes when the door opened had betrayed nothing.

Captain Lockwood had only three months' leave; five weeks of which were gone when he and Joy came to this understanding; the journey out would occupy nearly another three weeks, they were going overland to Naples; so there remained only

a month to get Joy's outfit and *trousseau* and prepare for the wedding.

It was therefore necessarily a very short engagement, only a month, but they had waited so long before for each other that neither Jack nor Joy regretted it.

They spent the first few days of their honeymoon at Dover, where they were joined by Rose and Green and little Gladys, whom they took with them, leaving Lance with Mr. and Mrs. Oxburgh, to comfort them in their loneliness now both their daughters were married and Felix only able to pay then "angel's" visits, few and far between. Felix was going to meet the bride and bridegroom at Venice and go with them as far as Rome.

So Jack's second house was built on the rock of a true love, which had already weathered many storms and withstood gales and floods in the past, and there is little doubt a marriage built on such a foundation will withstand all the storms which life may bring to bear upon it; no less solid a foundation would warrant the hope that Jack and his second wife may live happy ever after.

L'ENVOI.

IT was evening.

The sun had set, and the pale moon had risen, and was casting her silvery light over that magic city of Venice, wrapping her marble palaces in its sheen, and casting their long reflections into the waters of the canals.

On the Piazzetta, between the granite columns of St. Theodore and the Winged Lion, stood, as they had stood nearly six years ago, Felix Oxburgh and Jack Lockwood; they had their backs to the sea and were looking, Jack at the Ducal Palace, never so lovely as by moonlight, Felix at the cupolas and façade of St. Mark.

They were both changed, Jack even more than Felix, though the latter was now tonsured and in priest's clothes; they were both strikingly handsome men; Felix conspicuously so because of his gigantic proportions.

"Do you remember our standing here six years ago, Felix, and wondering what we should think of life fifty years hence?" said Jack.

"Perfectly. We looked over the sea then, now we have turned our backs on the sea, the future, and are content to gaze

THE HOUSE THAT JACK BUILT.

at the Piazza ; a sign, I think, we are both happier now than we were then ; we are content to live in the present, which only children and happy people do."

"Are you very happy, old boy?" said Felix affectionately, running his arm through Jack's.

"Perfectly ; I don't deserve it, but I am. I seem to have lived a lifetime since you and I last stood here, Felix ; and yet as I look back on it all it seems like a dream, and I can criticize my conduct as though I were another person. I was very much to blame, far more than any one knows ; my only excuse is I never guessed she cared for me : had I known it, I should have acted differently."

"I don't think you would ever have been happy, Jack ; you see, your house was built on the sand ; ruin was inevitable some day. Poor child ! How lovely she was. *Requiescat in pace*," said Felix, and Jack knew from the tone in which he spoke of Amy, he still regarded her with tender affection. "But, Jack, I have no fears for your future this time ; you have built on the rock of true love. Joy is your lot, I hope, in every sense," said Felix.

"And are you happy, Felix?"

"Yes ; I have found my vocation. Life is not vanity, Jack, as we half-feared years ago ; it is a battle in which it behoves us to be valiant, that we may gain the day to which there is no night.

"No at noonday, in the bustle of man's work-time,
Greet the unseen with a cheer!
Bid him forward, breast and back, as either should be,
"Strive and thrive!" cry "Speed,—fight on, fare ever
There as here!"

MAR 31 1915

THE END.

